

# SERMONS

PREACH'D

Upon several Occasions

Before the

# KING

AT

# WHITE-HALL.

By the Right Reverend Father in God,  
*JOHN WILKINS*, late Lord  
Bishop of *CHESTER*.

To which is added,

A

## DISCOURSE

Concerning the

## Beauty of Providence.

By the same Author.

LONDON:

Printed by *H. Cruttenden* for *Robert Sollers*  
in *St. Pauls Church-Yard*. 1677.



Slaw, 6835

SEYMOUR

THE RECORD  
OF THE  
CITY OF SEYMOUR  
INDIANA

KING

WILLIAM

THE  
CITY OF SEYMOUR  
INDIANA

THE  
CITY OF SEYMOUR  
INDIANA

DISCOUNT

THE  
CITY OF SEYMOUR  
INDIANA

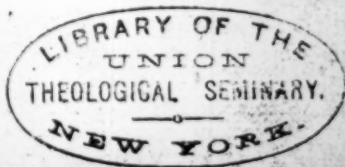
THE  
CITY OF SEYMOUR  
INDIANA



TO THE  
Right Honourable  
G E O R G E Lord  
BERKELEY, Lord  
of Berkeley, Mombray,  
Seagrave, and Bruce,  
Castos Rotulorum of  
the Counties of  
Gloucester and Surrey;  
and Governour of  
the LEVANT COM-  
PANY.

May it please your Lordship,

HAVING these scat-  
tered Discourses  
in my custody, and  
A 3 wholly



*The Epistle Dedicatory.*

wholly at my disposal, either to republish, or suffer them to sleep in that darkness wherein they lay ; I thought it very incongruous to the necessities of this degenerate age, to let the excellent works of so learned, pious, and worthy a *Prelate* be extinct, and lye hid from the open view of the World ; sith they are none of the worst of which this Great Man  
was

*The Epistle Dedicatory.*

was pleased to bless  
our times with.

These Sermons were  
fram'd for, and prea-  
ched before a Great  
and Regal Auditory;  
though by their plain,  
natural, and unaffect-  
ed Style (a thing  
he always delighted  
in) one would have  
thought the contrary;  
since the *Chappels* as  
well as *Courts* of Prin-  
ces, are by byass'd and  
self-interested princi-  
ples

*The Epistle Dedicatory*

ples so often flatter'd.

And now I thought  
no man so fitting as  
your Lordship to shel-  
ter these Discourses  
from the rage and fu-  
ry of the Atheistical  
Male-Contents of the  
Age; they being the  
Fundamentals of Re-  
ligion that he treats  
of; which I am very  
sensible your Lordship  
well knows, are not  
only slighted, but bid  
open defiance to, and  
the

*The Epistle Dedicatory:*

the Authority of their  
Institution call'd in  
question.

That man would cer-  
tainly be held a no-  
torious Delinquent,  
that should openly  
affront the King, and  
disown that Autho-  
rity, and Legislative  
Power, by which he  
commands Obedience  
to his Laws. The Con-  
sequent may be just-  
ly applicable, in the  
words of a Reverend  
and

*The Epistle Dedicatory.*

*\* Dr. Stil-*  
*lingfleet.* and Learned \* Writer  
of our times, " But to  
" Blaspheme God, and  
" Deride his Service,  
" seems to have a much  
" greater malignity in  
" it, inasmuch as our  
" obligations to his Ho-  
" nour and Service, are  
" much greater than  
" they can be to any  
" created Being. And  
to such kind of men it

*\* Morn.*  
*Du Pless.*  
*de veri-*  
*tat. Re-*  
*lig. Chr.* may be said, in the  
words of a \* Noble Au-  
thor, *Agnoscant vero hanc*  
*Cap. 1.* *suam*

*The Epistle Dedicatory.*

*suam formam, tanquam in speculo, miseri & perditilli, qui Deum obliviscendo, se sui oblitos non vident; quia formam naturamque, essentiam, quantum in se est, oblitterarunt.*

That I make this Dedicatory Epistle proceeds not from a desire thus publickly to expose my self, (for as I can have no interest to court the applause, so neither have

*The Epistle Dedicatory.*

have I any reason to value the censure of the World) but it is from a sincere principle to express that Reverence I bear your Lordship; whom I know as you have Goodness to pardon, so I presume to, your Honour will be both ready and willing to stand in the defence of this bold Address.

That Length of Days  
may be in your Right  
Hand,



*The Epistle Dedicatory.*

Hand, and in your  
Left, Riches and Ho-  
nour, is the Hearty  
and Affectionate Pray-  
er of him, who desires  
nothing more, than to  
subscribe himself, (in all  
the circumstances of  
a becoming *Devoir*.)

*My LORD,*

Your Lordship's

most Humble and

most Obedient Servant,

J. G.

THE FIRST PART OF  
THE HISTORY OF THE  
LIFE OF JOHN RICHARDSON  
BY  
JAMES RICHARDSON  
IN TWO VOLUMES  
THE FIRST VOLUME  
LONDON  
PRINTED BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAULS CHURCH-YARD  
1791

THE SECOND VOLUME  
LONDON  
PRINTED BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAULS CHURCH-YARD  
1791

TO THE

# READER.

WHEN first these Discourses were sent to the Press there was neither Epistle nor Preface design'd, but it being a thing altogether uncouth and unusual; I was unwilling to affect any thing of singularity, and in this affair (to be so great a friend to the Bookseller and Printer, as) to follow the common Road.

If there is any thing in the Publisher that thou maist  
call

## To the Reader.

call folly or presumption it was done through ignorance or inadvertency; and since I acknowledg my fault, I hope you will pardon it.

As for the following Discourses they are so admirably well pen'd, and their contexture so smooth and even that they are beyond all imaginable praise. It would argue nothing less than presumption to speak in their behalf, and it needs nothing more than the name of its Author to Recommend it to the World.

Farewel.

[ 1 ]

A

# SERMON

Preached before the

# KING

A T .

WHITE-HALL,

*In Lent, 1669.*

---

PROV. 3. 16, 17.

*Length of days is in her right hand, and in her  
left hand Riches and Honour.*

*Her ways are ways of Pleasantness, and all  
her Paths are Peace.*

**T**HE chief design of the Wise-  
man in this Text, is, to set forth  
the many great advantages that be-  
long to *Religion*; in order to which,

B

he

he doth here enumerate those five principal things that must contribute to a compleat state of Happiness in this World, namely, *Health*, and *Riches*, and *Honour*, and *Pleasure*, and *Peace*; and asserts concerning them, that they are the proper effects of that wisdom which consists in being Religious.

This he expresses by way of *Allegory*, representing Wisdom (as is usual for other Virtues) in the shape of a Woman, or Queen, with her Arms extended, in the posture of directing and rewarding her Followers; holding in her right-hand the blessing of *Health*, or *length of Days*, the great Promise of the *Law*; to which the Precedence of the right-hand is therefore given, because it is amongst all worldly Blessings the greatest and most desirable; that, without which, a man cannot enjoy any thing else, nor so much as his own self; *Length of days is in her right-hand*. And then, for those other things, which the generality of men do so much covet

cover and labour after, *Wealth*, and *Reputation*; these likewise are at her disposal, and must proceed from her gift; *And in her left-hand, Riches and Honour*. And, as for the *Cheerfulness* of our conditions, he affirms, that the truest Pleasure must be found in those ways that are directed by her; *Her ways are ways of Pleasantness*. And because there are several things which have some present delight in them, seeming to drop as the Honey-comb, and to be smoother Prov. 5.4. than Oyl, and yet upon trial, do prove in the issue, *bitter as Wormwood, and sharp as a two-edged Sword*; therefore 'tis added, that her ways are not only *pleasant*, but they are likewise safe and quiet; *all her paths are Peace*.

That these things are the effects of Religion, is here only affirmed, which, to them who believe the Authority of Scripture, is evidence sufficient: But, it were easy to prove this concerning each of them, by all other kinds of evidence,

of which such matters are capable.

I purpose at this time to treat only concerning the third of them, namely, *Honour*; as being the most proper Subject for this Presence and Auditory. And that this can only be attain'd by Religion and Virtue, I doubt not but to prove with so much strength and perspicuity, as shall be sufficient to convince any one who will but attend and consider.

In order to this, I shall first endeavour to state the true nature of *Honour*, and to shew wherein the most proper Notion of it doth consist; 'tis an equivocal word, and is capable of various senses.

*First*, Sometimes 'tis used to denote *worthy and creditable Parentage*; the being derived from such Ancestors as have been famous in their Generation for some eminent Virtue or Exploit: Wherein there is this benefit, that a man hath great examples in his own Family, and so  
much



much the stronger Obligation not to degenerate from them : But it shews rather what such a man should be, than what he is; and, to a person that is not Virtuous, doth prove a prejudice rather than an advantage.

*Secondly*, Sometimes 'tis used to signify *Titles of Place and Dignity*, according to the various orders and degrees of Nobility in several Nations : But, this kind of Honour depending meerly upon the Princes Favour, must therefore be wholly extrinsecal, and consequently can have no more due to it than a meer *external* respect. Such persons may challenge from us, that we should give them their due Titles, and demean our selves towards them with that Observance and Ceremony as becomes their Quality : But then, as to *inward* esteem and affection, they can demand no greater a share of this, than according as their real worth and virtue shall require. The Royal Stamp upon any kind of *Metal* may be sufficient to give it an *extrin-*

*sick* value, and to determine the Rate at which it is to pass amongst Coins, but it cannot give an *intrinsick* value, or make that which is but *Brass*, to be *Gold*.

'Tis true indeed, there are some Callings and Relations of men, to whom an inward Veneration is due, though the persons themselves should not be Virtuous; namely, *Magistrates*, and *Ministers*, and *Parents*, and *Benefactors*; who, having somewhat of a Divine *Stamp* and *Impress* upon them, may therefore challenge from us, that we should demean our selves towards them, both with such an *outward* Respect as may become their *Places*, and with such an *inward* Respect too, as may be sutable to that *Image* which they bear, our *dependance* upon them, and *obligation* to them. But then, we cannot be obliged to think such persons good men, unless we have some evidence to believe them to be so, or at least, not to be otherwise; So that they are beholding to something extrinsical to their

their Persons, namely, to their Callings and Relations, for that Honour which is paid to them.

*Thirdly*, the word *Honour* is sometimes used for that Esteem and Reputation which a man hath in the World, especially amongst Virtuous Persons; according to which sense 'tis defin'd by *Tully* to be *Consentiens Laus Bonorum*, <sup>*Tuscul.*</sup> the concurrent approbation <sup>Q. 2.</sup> of good men; when those, who are best able to judg of real worth, shall both think and speak well of others, this is properly honouring of them. And in this sense (which is the most proper notion of the words) it is one of the greatest blessings that this World can afford; much to be preferred before Riches, or Pleasures, or Life it self. *A good Name is rather to be chosen than great Riches, and loving kindness rather than Silver or Gold*, Prov. 22. 1. One that is a Generous, Virtuous man, will choose to dye, rather than do any thing that may expose him to Infamy: *St. Paul* was of this mind; *It were better for* <sup>1 Cor. 9.</sup> *me* <sup>15.</sup>

*me to dye, than that any should make my glorying void.* There have been some wise men, who have neglected and refused that other kind of *Honour*, consisting in Titles of Dignity, as conceiving more of burden and temptation in it, than of real advantage ; but no man in his wits did ever despise a good name, unless such profligate dissolute wretches, as did either despair of, or resolve against doing any thing that might deserve it. 'Tis not easy to reckon up the many advantages that belong to this kind of *Honour*: 'Tis *Power*, inabling a man to do things great and worthy, to be useful to his Friends and his Countrey : 'Tis *Safety*, and doth give a man such an interest in the esteem and affection of others, as will make them concern'd for his Welfare, ready to stand by him and assist him in any kind of danger ; which are so great advantages, that whosoever shall wilfully neglect them, must needs be rendered very contemptible.

Having

Having thus *Explained* the proper Notion of *Honour*, I proceed in the next place to *Prove*, that Religion and Virtue is the only means for the attaining of it. This I shall endeavour to do by *Testimony*, and by *Reason*, and by *Experience*, which are all the kinds of Arguments that such matters are capable of.

*First, By Testimony.* The Scripture doth abound in divers Assertions and Promises to this purpose : Such as are Religious are stiled the *Excellent of the Earth*, Psal. 16. 3. and said to be *more excellent than* <sup>Cap. 12.</sup> *their Neighbours*, Prov. 17. 27. They <sup>26.</sup> are *God's peculiar Treasure*. The <sup>Deut. 32.</sup> *dearly beloved of his Soul*. He sets <sup>9.</sup> *apart the Man that is Godly for him-* <sup>Exod. 19.</sup> *self.* Though such persons may be <sup>5.</sup> *but low*, as to their outward Condition ; being put to *wander up and down in Sheep-skins and Goat-skins*, being *destitute, afflicted, tormented*, seeking for refuge in *Desarts and Mountains, in Dens and Caves of the Earth* ; yet may they upon the account

count of Religion, be of such excellent value, that in the Judgment of the Holy Ghost, *The whole World is not worthy of them*, Heb. 11. 37, 38.

Pro. 1. 9. The Wise-man speaking of Religion, saith, that *it shall be an ornament of Grace unto thy head, and as a chain about thy neck. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee, and bring thee to honour; She shall give to thy head an ornament of Grace, and a Crown of Glory.* God hath engaged himself by Promise to those that are Religious, that *he will set them above other Nations; they shall be made the Head, and not the Tail*, Deut. 28. 13. He hath said, *Those that honour me, I will honour*, 1 Sam. 2. 30. And certainly, he, who is the King of Kings, must needs be the Fountain of Honour, and able to dispose of it as he pleases.

John 12. 26. But, because such Persons as are no friends to Religion, may have but a small esteem for the Authority of Scripture: Therefore to these I would suggest

suggest

fuggeſt the concurrent Opinion of Wiſe Men in all former Ages. Though the Ancient *Philophers* were divided into various Sects, and differ'd very much from one another in ſeveral Opinions ; yet, in this they have all agreed, that Honour is due only to Virtue, and doth not properly belong to any thing elſe. It would be tedious to enumerate the ſeveral Sayings to this purpoſe, out of *Plato*, *Ariſtotle*, *Tully*, *Seneca*, and the other Ancients : And certainly, that Man muſt needs have a very extravagant conceit of his own Abilities, who dares prefer his private Opinion, before the General Conſent of Wiſemen in former Ages, ſuch as have been counted the greateſt Maſters of Reaſon, and moſt eminent for their Knowledge and their Wiſdom,

*Secondly*, I proceed in the next place to confirm this by the Principles of *Reaſon*, That Religion and Virtue is the cauſe of *Honour*. There may be a two-fold Cauſe of Things

*Moral,*

{ *Moral,*  
 { *Natural.*

That is said to be the *Moral* Cause, which doth dispose a Man to such a Condition, upon the Account of Fitness and Desert; and in this sense *Honour* is the *Reward of Virtue*. There is an equitable right, a suitableness and congruity, that Good Men should be loved and esteemed, and Vicious Men exposed to shame: *As Snow in Summer, and as Rain in Harvest, so is Honour unsuitable for a Fool*, Prov. 26. 1. The intermixing of Winter and Summer, would not cause a greater disorder in the *Natural* World, than the cross disposal of *Honour* and contempt would in the *Moral* World. And hence is it, that the Laws of all Nations and Governments, have owned it as a Point of Policy, to excite their Subjects unto Virtuous and worthy Actions, by the Motive of *Honour*; and to deter



ter them from Vicious courses, by the consideration of the shame and contempt which belongs to them.

That is said to be the *Natural* Cause of a thing, which doth by its own immediate efficacy produce the Effect; and in this sence likewise is Virtue the Cause of *Honour*. The Fire doth not more Naturally produce heat, than Goodness doth Love and Esteem; Which will appear very plain, if we consider, That *Inward* Honouring is nothing else, but the Believing a Man to be Worthy and Virtuous; and the Testifying this by our Words and Actions is *Outward* Honouring. Now, nothing can be more evident, than that the best means for one to be thought good, is to be so.

A Man may excel in Strength, Beauty, Riches, Learning, Wit, which are all commendable things, and will contribute to a Man's esteem; But, if we apprehend such a one to be notoriously Vicious, This esteem will not be accompanied with Love, but  
with

with Fear, Hate, and Envy ; because such a one hath by these things so much the greater advantage of doing Mischief in the World : Whereas on the other side, though a Man should be destitute of all these other advantages, without any Nobility in his Ancestors, but of a small Estate, a low Condition ; yet, if we believe him to be a truly Virtuous Man, it cannot be, but that we must pay a Veneration to him.

All things whatsoever have some Natural Standard, whereby the Goodness of them is to be measured ; namely , their suitableness unto that chief end, for which they are designed. We do not therefore account a *Ship* to be good, because 'tis curiously painted and gilded, or carved and inlayed, but because 'tis fitted for all the purposes of Navigation, which is the proper end and use of a Ship : Nor do we therefore account a Sword to be good, because it hath a rich Hilt, and an Embroidered Scabbard, but because it is fit  
for

for the proper use of a Sword, which is to cut. They are the comparisons of *Seneca*, speaking of this Subject; *In homine quoque, nihil ad rem pertinet, quantum aret, quantum sciret, a quam multis salutetur, &c. sed quam bonus sit.* It should be so likewise in our esteem of men, who are not so much to be valued by the Grandeur of their Estates or Titles, as by their inward goodness.

Every man is endowed with a natural Principle, inclining him to a state of Happiness, and hath in some measure, both an ability to judg of, and a freedom and liberty for applying himself unto those Duties, which are the proper means for the promoting of this end. And this being the peculiar difference of the Humane Nature, therefore a man is not upon any other account to be justly praised or blamed, but according to the right or wrong use of this natural liberty; and consequently as a man doth find either in himself or others, a constant and firm resolution to make a  
right

right use of this, so should he proportion his esteem accordingly; preferring this *inward* Greatness, this rectitude of Mind, whereby a man is resolved in every condition to do that which shall appear to be his duty, before any *external* Greatness whatsoever.

There are two kind of Virtues amongst all the rest, which are by general consent esteemed Venerable, and such as do advance the Reputation of those who are endowed with them;

namely { *Wisdom,*  
          { *Courage.*

Because they have a more intrinsic rise, and do less depend upon external advantages, but seem rather to be rooted in the inward frame and temper of mind; and withal, are most beneficial both to our selves and others: The former signifying a man to have those *intellectual* abilities which are proper to his kind, whereby



them : The *Philosopher* doth define Wisdom to consist in an ability and inclination, to make choice of the right *Means* in the prosecution of our true *End*. And nothing can enable a Man for this but Religion, both as to the *Subordinate* End of *Temporal* Happiness in this World ; but chiefly with respect to that great and *Supreme* End of *Eternal* Happiness in the World to come.

2. And then for *Courage*, 'Tis not possible for a Man to be truly Valiant, unless he be withal truly Religious : He may be bold and daring, and able (in a fearless manner) to rush upon any danger ; but then he must stifle his Reason from considering what the Consequences of things may be, what shall become of him hereafter, if he should miscarry. There being no man whatsoever so totally free from the Apprehension of a future state, but that when he is serious and considerate, he must be startled with Doubts and Fears concerning it : So that there cannot be any  
rational,

rational, sedate, deliberate, courage; but only in such, as have some good hopes of a better Estate in the other World; And, 'tis Religion only that can inable a Man for this,

3. I proceed to the Third kind of Argument to this purpose, from *Experience*; By which, I mean that Practical Knowledg, which every man may attain by his own Observation of the usual course of things in the World: And, by this, it will appear, that no kind of persons have been more highly revered in the Hearts and Consciences of others, than those that have been most eminent for their Virtue and Religion; which hath been always true, both with respect to Publick Communities, and Private Persons.

*First, For Nations*; If we consult the Stories of former Times, we shall find that saying of *Solomon* constantly verified, That *Righteousness doth* Prov. 14.  
*exalt a Nation, but Sin doth prove a* 34  
*reproach to it*: And more especially the sin of Irreligion and Prophane-  
ness; As this doth increase in any  
C 2 Nation

Nation, so must the Honour and Reputation of that Nation decrease. The *Roman* Empire was then at the highest, as to its Name and Greatness, when it was so as to its Virtue; when they were most punctual in observing the Rites of their Religion, (though that were a false way of worship) most Heroical in their Justice, Courage, Fidelity, Gratitude; then it was that they deserv'd to Govern the World, and to be had in greatest Honour above all other Nations. And not only *Tully* and *Polybius*, two Heathen Writers, who, upon that Account, might be thought more partial; But *St. Austin* also and *Lactantius*, two of the Fathers, do ascribe the flourishing of that Empire, when it was at his height, to the Religion, and Piety, and Virtue of those times; And, as they did afterward degenerate from this, so did they decline likewise in their Greatness and Honour,

2. Thus also hath it been with particular persons; Amongst the *Heathens*, What Elogies do we find in the  
Ho-



Honour of *Socrates*, *Aristides*, *Cato* *Epictetus* ? The latter of which, though but a poor Slave, had yet such a Veneration paid to his Memory, that his Earthen Lamp by which he was wont to study, was, after his Death, sold for 3000 Drachms.

Nor was it otherwise amongst the *Christians* ; The *Apostles* were but poor Fisher-men , Illiterate Mechanics ; Many of the *Martyrs* were but of mean condition, much Opposed and Persecuted in the World; And yet these Men, during the time of their lives, were highly Reverenced amongst those that knew them ; and since their Deaths, what can be more Glorious than that Renown which they have amongst Men, when the greatest Kings and Princes will not mention their Names without Reverence ; when whole Nations are willing to set apart, and to observe Solemn Days and Festivals in Honour of their Memories.

And, as it hath always been thus formerly, so I appeal to every mans

breast, whether it be not so now : Let them but examine what their Inclinations are towards such Persons, whom they believe to be truly Virtuous : Not only to such amongst them as are their particular *Acquaintance* and *Friends*, but likewise to *Strangers*, nay, to very *Enemies* ; whether they do not esteem, and love them, and will well to them.

I shall crave leave to speak briefly to two *Objections*, that may be made against what I have been Proving.

I. The Scripture saith (speaking of good Men) That *the World shall revile and persecute them, and speak all manner of evil against them* : Our Saviour himself was *despised and rejected of Men* ; And his Apostles were *used as the rubbish and off-scouring of all things*.

To these two things may be said by way of *Answer*.

*First*, It cannot otherwise be expected, but that when a New Religion is to be set up, men must be highly concern'd in their opposing of it, and

and of those that promote it : And the fore-cited Texts do particularly relate to this very case ; when *Christianity* was first introduced into the World, and to be propagated by the Sufferings of those that Professed it ; which being an *exempt case* , and not according to the usual course of things, therefore these Texts are not equally applicable to other Times and Places, when and where the True Religion hath obtained, and the Kings prove Nurfing Fathers to it.

*Secondly* , Those that knew our Saviour and his Followers, did highly Honour them : And, as for others, that were ignorant of them, and not sufficiently convinced of their Goodness, 'tis no wonder that they used them accordingly. The most vicious person that is, if he doth either know, or have reason to think another to be Virtuous, must of necessity pay to him an Inward Reverence ; Because 'tis not in any mans power, so far to offer violence to his own Faculties, as to believe any thing a-

against its Evidence. 'Tis true indeed, men have a greater power over their *Words* and *Actions*, than they have over their *Belief*; and therefore they may call, and use such a one as they please, they may revile, and persecute him; And, in this sence, *Honor est honorante*, But, even in so doing, they seem to pay a Veneration to *Religion* it self, whil't they are fain to disguise it, under the Names of Hypocrisie, Heresie, Superstition, thereby to justify themselves in their opposing of it.

II. It appears by the Experience of all Ages, that Vitious Men are sometimes had in Honour.

To this it may be Answer'd.

1. *External* Honour may be due to them.

2. *Internal* Honour may be given to them, by such as do not know them. The meer Opinion of being Virtuous, must of necessity have the same advantage in this respect, with *Real Goodness*; The main difference is, that it is not like to last, because  
it

is almost Morally impossible, for a Man, who doth only dissemble Virtue, to stand always upon so strict a guard, as not to be discover'd. If it be said, that men, who are Notoriously Vitious, are sometimes applauded, and Cry'd-Up for their Virtue; It may be answer'd, That this cannot be so truly stiled *Honouring* as *Flattering*; The proper Notion of which doth consist in giving undue Commendations; Nor will any contribute to it, but vile Sycophants, the worst kind of Enemies, and the most Incompetent Judges of real worth: Such only being fit to give Praise, who are themselves Praiseworthy.

Now if this be the true state of the Case I have been speaking to; That the generality of Wise and Considerate Men, in all former times, have attested to this Truth, if the Reason of the thing require that it must be so; And if it appear accordingly from Common Experience to be so, If the most Material Objections against

gainst it, may be so plainly and fully satisfied; then there can be no sufficient Reason to doubt of the truth of this Proposition; That Religion and Virtue is the most proper means to promote the Interest of Honour, which is the thing I am to prove.

I shall crave leave to suggest two things by way of *Application*, and I have done.

*First*, This may convince men of Folly, who seek for *Honour* by any other Means. The great Instances which are commonly given, of Mens being *Fools*, is, from their chusing such Means, as are altogether insufficient for the End they Design: As the endeavouring to make a *Blackamore* White, by washing of him, &c. But, the using of such Means, as are not only insufficient for, but opposite unto, and Destructive of the End they Propose; this is a degree above *Folly*, and may be stiled *Madness*: 'Tis as if a Man should run into the Water to dry himself, and into the Fire to cool himself; And yet this is the Case

Case of many Men in the World, who propose to themselves such Courses, for the Promoting of their *Honour*, as are most Destructive of it; namely, Prophaneness. and Contempt of Religion, Despising that which other Men stand in Awe of; by which they think to get the Reputation of *Wit*, and of *Courage*; Of *Wit*, by pretending to penetrate more deeply into the Nature of things, and to understand them better than others do; not to be so easily imposed upon, as other Credulous People are. Of *Courage*, by their not being so easily scared at the Apprehension of Danger at a distance.

But, the Plain Truth is, such Persons do hereby prove themselves to be both *Fools* and *Cowards*.

*Fools*, In mistaking their great Interests, in making choice of such means, as can never promote the End they Design; There being no kind of Men that are exposed (whatsoever they themselves may think of it) to Publick Infamy and Hatred, than

than those that seek for Credit by despising of *Religion*. *Fools*, in venturing their *future Estates* and their *Souls* upon such hazards, as all mankind would cry-out-upon for the most palpable folly and madness, if they should do the like, towards their *Temporal Estates*, or their *Bodies*.

*Cowards*, In being more afraid of little dangers, because they are *present*, than of greater, because they are *future*, and at a distance: As that Souldier, who doth more dread the present danger of Fighting, when he is obliged to it, than the future danger of suffering *Martial Law* for running away, may justly be esteemed a notorious Coward; so that man who is more afraid of a *present* inconvenience, by incurring the prejudice and displeasure of his loose Companions, to whom he would be acceptable, than of a *future* mischief from the Judgment of God.

No man will esteem another to be truly Valiant, because he is not afraid to do such vile unworthy things as  
will



will expose him to the displeasure and punishment of the Civil Magistrate ; much less should be so accounted, for daring to do such things, as will in the issue expose him to Divine Vengeance.

For men of no real worth to expect the esteem and affection of others, as it is very *unequal* on their parts, requiring Brick without Straw ; so neither is it *lawful* nor *possible* for others to allow it them : not *lawful*, because it is as well a man's duty to *contemn a vile person, as to honour* <sup>Psal. 15. 4.</sup> *them that fear the Lord.* Not *possible*, because men must necessarily judg according to the most prevailing Evidence ; nor can they esteem such an one to be worthy, whom they know to be otherwise, any more than they can believe that to be white and streight, which they see is black and crooked.

*Secondly*, If these things be so, it will hence follow, that men who have any sense of *Honour*, should, by these considerations, be excited to a love  
of

of that which is the only means to it, namely, *Religion* and *Virtue*. Those of slavish, sordid Spirits, may be more easily perswaded by the consideration of *Gain*; but no *motive* can be more powerful with noble and generous *Minds* than that of *Honour*. That man takes very ill measures of things, who doth not make it one of his principal cares to keep his Name unspotted; it being no easy matter to recover a forfeited Reputation.

Such Profligate Wretches, as are without any sense of *Honour* or *Shame*, may justly be esteemed the Publick *Pests* and *Mischiefs* of *Mankind*, and such as ought to be banished from amongst them, as being the common enemies to Government and Societies.

Of all sorts of men, there lies a peculiar Obligation upon them that are in *Publick Places*, to preserve their Reputations clear, and without blemish: A private Person is not so much concern'd to look after *Publick Fame*, as that man is, who is engag'd  
in

in *Publick Employment*. He that can abundantly satisfy himself, with the Conscience of well-doing, while he is in a *Private Station*, it once he be called to any such Employment, where he must be useful to others by his Authority; 'Tis most fitting then, that he should seek the Aid of *Opinion*, and *Publick Esteem*, because 'tis this which Rules the World, and stamps upon Things the Rates at which they are to pass.

There is nothing in this World that we can propose to our selves of greater benefit, than the Love and Esteem of good Men; I have shewed before that it is *Power*, 'tis *Safety*: And besides all the Advantages which we have by it *whilst we live*, 'tis one of those things that will *abide after us*, when we are gone out of this World; and for that reason a special regard is to be had to it: And, the more Wise any Man is, the more Care will he take to transmit a Grateful Memory of himself to future times; And, since he must be spoken  
of

of after his departure, he will take  
 Care that he be well spoken of, that  
 his Name may be as a precious Oint-  
 ment, leaving a Perfume behind it;  
 That men may *rise up at the mention*  
*of it, and call him blessed.*

I shut up all, with that affectionate  
 Exhortation of the Eloquent *Apostle*,  
*Phil. 4. 8. Finally Brethren, what-*  
*soever things are Venerable, whatso-*  
*ever things are Lovely, whatsoever*  
*things are of good Report, If there be*  
*any Virtue, if there be any Praise,*  
*think of these things. And the Peace*  
*of God, which passeth all understand-*  
*ing, shall keep your Hearts and minds*  
*through Jesus Christ.*

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FINIS.

[ 33 ]

A

Serm. II.

# SERMON

Preached before the

# KING

A T

WHITE-HALL,

1670.

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ECCLES. 12. 13.

*Let us hear the conclusion of the  
whole matter ; Fear God, and keep  
his Commandments : for this is the  
whole duty of man.*

**T**His Book is one of Solomon's  
Philosophical Discourses, con-  
taining such principal Observations  
D about

about *Human Affairs*, as are apt to offer themselves to the thoughts of every serious considerate man, especially concerning those things which may more immediately either promote or hinder our *Happiness*.

This Text is the *Conclusion* which he infers upon the whole matter, that which is the most natural result of all such Debates and Enquiries.

In the former part he had taken into consideration those several *states of life*, to which men usually apply themselves for *Happiness*; namely, *Learning* and *Wisdom*, *Mirth* and *Pleasures*, *Power* and *Greatness*, *Riches* and *Possessions*: Each of which he doth by great variety of Arguments, prove to be vanity and vexation, and altogether insufficient to the End for which they are designed.

Then he takes notice of the several *Accidents of life*, whether they concern our *Endeavours*, or our *Persons*.

1. For our *Endeavours*. The most likely means are not always effectual for the attaining of their End. The utmost that Human Councils and Prudence can provide for, is to take care, when they are to contend in a Race, that they be swifter than those who run against them; or when they are to fight a Battel, that they be stronger than those whom they are to encounter. And yet *the Race is not always to the swift, nor the Battel to the strong; neither yet Bread*<sup>Chap. 9:</sup>  
*to the wise, nor yet Riches to men of*<sup>11, 12.</sup>  
*understanding, nor Favour to men of skill; but time and chance happens to them all.* (i. e.) There is a secret Providence which doth over-rule all those worldly events in such a manner, as is not accountable to Human Reason. Even amongst *Secular Businesses*, which we are apt to think most within our reach and compass, there is nothing so much under the power of the wisest Counsels and Endeavours, but that the Providence of God may interpose for the dis-

appointing of it, and render it ineffectual.

And then for those *Accidents* to which our *Persons* are liable, He observeth these three things :

Ch. 5. 17. 1. Our obnoxiousness to *Pain* and *Sickness*, which he stiles by the names of *Wrath* and *Sorrow* ; under which, when a man lies languishing, none of his Worldly Enjoyments will signify any thing to him ; nor will they be able to afford him any such ease or help, but that he may be thereby cut off in the midst of his days, and then all his thoughts perish, or else waste away a great part of his life with much anguish and weariness ; and may sometimes, perhaps, be driven to that extremity by noisome and painful Diseases, as to chuse strangling and Death, rather than Life.

Ch. 11. 8. 2. If it be supposed, that by the strength and cheerfulness of a Man's natural temper, he should escape these, & live many years, and rejoyce in them all ; yet he must remember the days of darkness, which shall be many. (i. e.)  
Those



Those who devote themselves to continual Mirth and Pleasure, cannot yet avoid the thought of their *future estates*, what shall become of them hereafter, when they are to depart out of this World; but that the remembrance of this will be often thrusting into their Minds when ever they are retired and serious. And this being to them a dark obscure condition; concerning their well-being, in which they can have no reasonable hopes, must needs therefore be a great damp and allay to all their other Enjoyments.

3. But in the third place: Suppose a man should be able to avoid *sickness*, and to put the trouble of *these thoughts* likewise far from him; yet there is somewhat else which he cannot possibly decline, *Old Age* will unavoidably steal upon him, with all the infirmities of it; *When the grinders shall be few, and appetite cease;* Ch. 12. 3.  
*when those who look out of the windows, shall be darkned, and the keepers of the house shall tremble:* when

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*when those who look out of the windows, shall be darkned, and the keepers of the house shall tremble:* when

a man shall become a burden to himself, and to his Friends ; when those of his nearest Relations, whom he hath most obliged by kindness, shall think it time for him to depart unto

Ch. 12. 5. his *long home*, to creep off the Stage, and make room for succeeding Generations; and then, after a little Funeral-pomp of the *Mourners going about the streets*, a man shall be buried out of the way, and forgotten :

Ch. 2. 16. *For there is no remembrance of the wise, more than of the fool ; seeing that which now is, in the days to come shall be forgotten.* Every Generation producing somewhat which seems new and strange, to take up Men's talk and wonder, and to drown the Memory of former Persons and Actions. And I appeal to any rational man, Whether these are not some of the most material reflections that occur about Human Affairs.

Now from all these premises put together, he inserts this Conclusion in the Text, That *to fear God, and keep his Commandments, is the Whole*  
of

of *man* (i. e.) To be serious in the matter of Religion, and careful about our future states, is that which every considerate man, after all his other disquisitions and experiments, will find to be his greatest interest, that which doth most of all deserve his care and study.

There are these Two parts in the words :

1. A *Description of Religion*, which in the former Clause is said to consist in *fearing God, and keeping his Commandments*. An awful apprehension of the Divine Nature, and an obedient submission to His Will.

2. A *Commendation of Religion*, in the latter Clause, *This is the Whole of man*.

It is the second of these only, which I purpose to treat of at this time.

In the handling of which, the first thing to be enquired into, is, What is the true import and meaning of this phrase in the Original: והכל האדם for the understanding of which, it

will be proper to consider the several ways of expressing it in other Translations.

The *Septuagint* and the *Vulgar* do render it *verbatim*, *This is All*, or *Every man*. The word *Duty*, which is supplied by our English, being not in the *Original*, or in other *Translations*. *This ought to be the way and course of all mankind*, so the *Targum*. *This is the course to which every man is designed*, so the *Syriack*. *This will be most profitable and advantageous to men*, so the *Arabick*. This is the *whole of man*; so some of our later Interpreters, most proper to the scope of the place, it being an usual *Analogy* in the *Hebrew*, *Totius universalis*, *pro toto integrante*, All for Whole.

So that according to these various Interpretations of the words, they may contain in them a three-fold reference: To the *Essence*, the *Happiness*, the *Business* of man.

According to which, the sense of them must be, That Religion, or the  
fear-

*fearing of God, and keeping his Commandments*, is a matter of so great consequence to Human Nature, that

1. The *Essence* or Being of man, may be said to consist in it.

2. The *Happiness* or well-being of man doth depend upon it.

3. The great *Business* or Duty of man, is to be conversant about it, and to labour after it.

These particulars I shall endeavour to make out by such clear Principles of Reason, attested to by several of the wisest Heathen Writers, as may be enough to satisfy any serious man who is able to understand the reason and consequence of things, and will but attend and consider.

1. I begin with the first: Religion is of so great importance, that the *Essence* of man may be said to consist in it. Mankind may be considered under a two-fold notion :

1. More *Separately*, and by it self, according to that Principle whereby  
'tis

'tis constituted in such a rank of Creatures.

2. More *Complexly*, as joyned in Society, for which Man seems to be naturally designed, and without which he could not well subsist. Now Religion will appear to be Essential to him in both these respects.

1. As considered *Separately*, according to those Principles by which he is framed. That which doth constitute any thing in its Being, and distinguish it from all other Things, This is that which we call the *Form* or *Essence* of a thing. And this, for the Human Nature doth consist in those very things which are the chief Principles and Foundations of Religion; namely, the *Apprehensions* of a *Deity*, and an *Expectation* of a *future state* after this life: Which no other Creature, below Man, doth partake of; and which are common to all Mankind, notwithstanding the utmost endeavours that can be used for the suppressing of them.

As



As for what is commonly alledged in the behalf of *Reason*, it may be observed, that in the Actions of many Brute Creatures there are discernable some kind of foot-steps, some imperfect strictures and degrees of Ratiocination ; such a natural Sagacity as bears a near resemblance to Reason. From whence it may follow, that it is not Reason in the general, which is the Form of Human Nature ; But Reason as it is *determined* to Actions of Religion, of which we do not find the least signs or degrees in Brutes. Man being the only Creature in this visible World, that is formed with a Capacity of worshiping and enjoying his Maker. Nor is this any new Opinion, but such as several of the Ancient Writers, *Philosophers, Orators, Poets* have attested to ; who make this Notion of a Deity, and Adoration of him, to be the true difference betwixt Man and Beast.

*Plutarch* asserts it to be a very improper thing to own such for Men,  
who

who do not acknowledg and adore the Deity. And in another place, he affirms Irreligion to be a kind of Stupor, whereby Men are deprived of their Senses.

So Tully : *Ex tot generibus, nullum est animal, &c.* Amongst all the living Creatures that are in the World, there is none but Man that hath any notion of a Deity ; and amongst Mankind, there is no Nation so wild and barbarous, but pretends to some Religion.

*De leg. l. i.* And in another place, *Quis hunc hominem dixerit ?* Why should such a one be accounted a Man, who by what he sees in the World, is not convinced of a Deity, and a Providence, and of that adoration he owes to it ? Of the same sense is that of the *Satyrist*, who speaking of Religion, says this of it :

*Juvenal.*  
*Sat. 15.*

———— *Separat hac nos*  
*A grege Brutorum, atq; ideo venerabile soli*  
*Sortiti ingenium divinorumque capaces.*

'Tis

'Tis this (saith he) that doth distinguish us from Brute Creatures, That we have Souls capable of Divine Impressions.

So that, by what hath been said, it should appear, that the Definition of Man may be rendered as well by the Difference of *Religiosum*, as *Rationale*. As for that Inconvenience which some may object, That Atheistical and Prophane persons will be hereby excluded: Why so they are by other Difference likewise: such persons having no just pretence to *Reason*, who renounce *Religion*: and it were well, if they might not only be *reckoned* amongst Beasts (as they are by the *Psalmist*, where he stiles them *Brutish*) but *driven* out amongst them likewise, and banished from all Human Society. as being publick Pests, and Mischiefs of Mankind, such as would debase the Nobility of our Natures, to the condition of Brute Creatures, and therefore fit only to live amongst them. Which brings me to the

2. Consideration of Man as a *Sociable* Creature. Religion is *essential* to him in this respect also, as being the surest Bond to tie men up to those respective duties towards one another, without which, Government and Society could not subsist.

Against  
Colotes.

There is a remarkable passage in *Plutarch* to this purpose, where he styles Religion, the *Cement of all Communities, and the chief Basis of all Legislative Power*. And in another place he says, That 'tis much more easy to build a City in the open air, without any ground to found it upon, than to establish a Government without Religion. *A City* (saith he) *may make some shift to subsist without Walls, Schools, Theaters, Houses; nay, without Money, but not without Religion.*

If it were not for this notion of a Deity, and those natural impressions which we have concerning Justice and Probity, so necessary for the conservation of Human Society; instead of those well-ordered Governments and

and Cities which are now in the World, Mankind must have lived either wild and solitary in Caves and Dens, like Savage-Beasts: or else in Troops of Robbers, subsisting upon the spoil and rapine of such as were weaker than themselves.

*Pietate sublata, fides etiam, & So-Nat. Deor. cietas humani generis, & una excel-*  
*lentissima virtus Iustitia tollitur,*  
 Take but away the awe of Religion, and all that Fidelity and Justice, so necessary for the keeping up of Human Society, must perish with it.

'Tis this fear of a Deity, and the sense of our obligation to Him, that is the only effectual means to restrain Men within the bounds of Duty. And were this wholly extinguished, there would follow such wild Disorders and Extravagancies amongst men, as would not leave so much as the face or least shadow of Virtue or Honesty in the World: There being no kind of Vice which men would not abandon themselves unto, considering the impetuoussness of  
 their

their own natural appetites, and the power of external temptations, were this restraint from Religion once removed or abolished.

The two chief Opposites to Religion, are *Profaneness* and *Superstition*. Both which, are prejudicial to Civil Government: The one by *destroying* Conscience, the strongest obligation to Political Duties : The other by *perverting* and abusing it; introducing in the stead it of, a new *Primum Mobile*, which ravisheth the Spheres of Government, and puts them into a preternatural course, as a Noble Author hath elegantly expressed it.

Lord Bacon's  
Es-  
says.

The two grand Relations that concern Society, are *Government* and *Subjection*. And Irreligion doth indispose men for both these.

1. For *Government*. Without Religion, Magistrates will lose that Courage and Confidence belonging to their stations; which they cannot so well exert in punishing the Offences of others, when they are guilty of the

the same or the like themselves. *Those that sit on the Throne of Judgment should be able to scatter away evil with their eyes*, as *Solomon* speaks, *Prov. 20. 8.* By their very presence and look, to strike an awe upon Offenders, which will not be so easily done, if they should lye under the same guilt themselves; *Sine Bonitate nulla Majestas*, saith *Seneca*: The very nature of Majesty doth denote Goodness as well as Power. And without this, Governours may easily lose that *Reverence* which is due to them from others, and consequently that *Authority* which they ought to have over them. When they cease to be Gods in respect of their Goodness, they may diminish in their Power; and though they should be able to keep men under as to their Bodies and Estates, yet will they decline as to that awful Love and Reverence whereby they should sway over the Hearts and Affections of men,

The Philosopher in the Fifth Book Cap. ii. of his Politicks, doth lay it down as

E a Rule

a Rule for Magistrates, That they must be careful to give publick Testimonies of their being religious and devout; for which he gives this double reason: Because the people will be less subject to entertain any jealousy or suspicion of *suffering injury* from such whom they believe to be religious. And withall, they will be less subject to *attempt the doing of injury* against such; as knowing that good Magistrates are after a more especial manner under the Divine Favour and protection having God to fight with them, and for them. 2. The want of Religion will indispose men for the condition of *Subjects*, and render them loose and unstable in those duties of obedience and submission required to that state. How can it be expected from that man who dares affront and despise God himself, that he should have any hearty reverence for his Deputies and Vicegerents? Those who are destitute of Religion and Conscience, as they are not to be trusted in any *ordinary*



dinary private duty towards those with whom they converse, much less can they be useful in any such extraordinary Action, whereby the publick welfare is to be promoted. where there are no seeds of Piety and Virtue, there can be nothing of Honour or Magnanimity.

He that is subject only upon the account of *Wrath*, and the *power of the Sword which is over him*, will be no longer so, when he hath an opportunity of escaping or resisting that Power. Nor is there any possible way to secure men in their quiet subjection and obedience; but by their being obliged for *Conscience sake*. And therefore such kind of persons, as by their open profaneness and contempt of Religion, do endeavour to destroy Conscience from amongst men, may justly be esteemed as the worst kind of Seditious Persons, and most pernicious to Civil Government.

Whatever Disputes have been raised concerning the lawfulness of

punishing men for their dissenting Consciences in matters of Religion; yet never any man questioned the lawfulness of punishing men for their profaneness and contempt of all Religion. Such men as renounce Conscience, cannot pretend that they suffer for it. And certainly this Vice doth upon many accounts deserve the greatest severity of Laws, as being *in its own nature* destructive of the very Principles of Government, and the Peace of all Human Societies: Besides the Mischiefs *consequent* upon it from Divine Vengeance,

So that upon all these accounts, there is just reason to infer the truth of this Proposition, That Religion is *totum hominis* in this first sense, as it refers to the *Essence* of Man considered either *Separately*, or as a Member of *Society*.

2. Tis so likewise with respect to the *Happiness* and well-being of Man. That is properly said to be the chief End or Happiness of a thing

thing, which doth raise its nature to the utmost perfection, of which it is capable according to its rank and kind. So the chief good belonging to a Vegetable or *Plant*, is to grow up to a state of maturity, to continue to its natural period, and to propagate its Kind, which is the utmost perfection that kind of Being is capable of. And whereas *Sensitive* Creatures, beside those things which are common to them with *Plants*, have likewise such faculties, whereby they are able to apprehend external objects, and to receive pain or pleasure from them; Therefore the Happiness proper to them, must consist in the Perfection of these Faculties, namely, in sensible pleasures, the enjoying of such things as may be grateful to their senses. But now *Mankind*, (if we will allow it to be a distinct rank of Creatures superior to Brutes) being endowed with such Faculties, whereby 'tis made capable of apprehending a Deity, and of expecting a future state after this life;

It will hence follow, That the proper happiness of man must consist in the perfecting of this Faculty ; namely, in such a state as may reconcile him to the Divine Favour and afford him the best assurance of a blessed Immortality hereafter. Which nothing else but Religion can so much as pretend to. And that this is most agreeable to Natural Light, may appear from the Testimonies of several of the Wisest Heathens, *Pythagoras*, *Plato*, *Epictetus*, &c. who assert a Man's Happiness, or chief End, to consist in a likeness or resemblance to the Divine Nature, in following of God, endeavouring to imitate him whom we worship, which are but several descriptions of Religion.

'Tis true indeed, the nature of *Man*, by reason of those other Capacities, common to him with *Plants* and *Brutes*, may stand in need of several other things, to render his condition pleasant and comfortable in this World, as *Health*, *Riches*, *Reputation*, *Safety*, &c, Now herein is the great

great advantage of Religion, that besides the principal work which it doth for us, in securing our future Estates in the other World; It is likewise the most effectual means to promote our happiness in this World; and that not only *Morally*, upon account of that Reward which Virtuous Actions do entitle a man unto from a just and a wise Providence; But *Naturally* also, by reason of that Physical efficacy which the Duties of Religion have in procuring for us each of those things, wherein our Temporal Happiness doth consist; in promoting the welfare not only of *particular* persons, but of *publick* Communities of Mankind in general, and of the whole *Universe*. Insomuch, that if we could suppose our selves in a capacity of capitulating with God, concerning the Terms upon which we would submit to his Government, and to chuse the Laws we would be bound to observe, It were not Possible for us to make any Proposals which upon all Accounts should be more ad-

vantageous to our own Interests, than those very Conditions, to which we are obliged by the Rules of Religion and Vertue. And herein doth the reasonableness of Religion, and the Beauty and Wisdom of Providence most eminently appear towards Mankind, in governing us by such Laws as do most apparently tend to the perfecting of our Natures, and in making that only to be our *Duty*, which is our *Interest*.

3. Religion is *Totum hominis*, with respect to the chief *Business* and *Duty* of man, that which he ought to be most intent upon, and conversant about, as to his Employment in this World. That *General* calling to which every man of what rank or quality soever is to be engaged. Men are distributed under other *particular* Callings, according as their Education, Abilities, Friends, and several Opportunities do dispose of them. But the obligation of Religion, being of universal concernment, doth extend

tend to all and every particular, there being none exempted from it, *Hoc est omnis homo*, Every man is concerned in it. And it is *totum hominis likewise*, 'Tis his calling, the chief business about which he is to be employed.

I do not say, that a man's thoughts are always to be taken up about the immediate Acts of Religion, any more than a Traveller is always to have his mind actually fixed upon the thought of his Journey's end. This would be inconsistent with the infirmity of our natures, and the necessity of our conditions in this World. But yet, as he that is upon a Journey, doth so order all his *Particular* Motions, as may be most conducive to his *General* End ; so should men *habitually*, though they cannot *actually*, in every affair have respect to their chief End, so as to observe all the duties of Religion, and never to allow themselves in any thing against the rules of it. And he that hath this care continually up-  
on

on his mind, (though he be but a Secular person) may properly be said to make Religion his *Business*.

Ch. 2. 3. The Wise-man in the beginning of this Book, had proposed as his grand Query to be discussed, to find out *what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the Heavens, all the days of their lives.* (i.e.) What was the chief employment or business which they should apply themselves to in this World. And here in the Text he asserts it to be the business of Religion; *Fearing God, and keeping his Commandments:* Suitable to that Precept of Moses Deut. 10. 12. *And now, O Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to serve the Lord thy God, and keep his Commandments:* And the Practice of St. Paul, who made this his daily exercise, to keep his Conscience void of offence, both towards God, and towards men. To the Reasonableness of this, several of the wisest Heathens have attested,



tested. That's a remarkable passage *Moral. 1. ad Eudem in fine.*  
 in *Aristotle* to this purpose, where he states that to be the most desirable proportion of all Worldly Felicities and Enjoyments, which is most consistent with men's devoting themselves to the business of Religion: And that to be either too much or too little of Wealth, or Honour, or Power, &c. whereby men are hindred in their meditating upon God, or their worshipping of him.

So *Epictetus*, discoursing concerning the work and business he was designed to, hath this passage: If I had been made a Nightingale or a Swan, I should have employed the time of my life in such a way as is suitable to the conditions of those Creatures: But being made a Man, capable of serving and worshipping that God from whom I had my Being, it's but reason that I should apply my self to this, as being my proper work and business; *ὅθεν μὲν τὸ ἐργάσθαι δεῖ.* And therefore hereunto will I devote my self, as being the chief Employment to which I am designed. {So

Lib. 8.  
Sect. 19.

So *Antoninus*: Every thing (saith he) is designed for some kind of work; Beasts and Plants, the Sun and Stars, *οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο*. And what do you conceive your business to be? Sensual pleasures? Bethink your self a little better, whether this be suitable to the Nobility of your nature, and those excellent faculties with which you are endowed.

Men usually apply themselves to that as their chief business, which may quit cost and be worth their labour by which their Interest is most promoted. And there is nothing can be more reasonable, than for that to be the chief business of a man's Life, which is the chief end of his Being. Which is the third thing I proposed to speak to.

I crave leave to mention two Inferences very briefly by way of Application, and I have done.

If this be so, that Religion is of so great Importance, that it may be stiled the *Whole of man*, with reference to all those things that are of greatest

est moment, The *Essence*, the *Happiness*, the *Business* of Man :

1. What Monsters of Folly, and Madness, and Contradiction, must those men be, who do upon this account put a greater value upon themselves, as being more learned, and wise and better than others, because they can contemn and despise Religion? Certainly, by all the Laws of God and Men, such Miscreants ought to be rendered most vile and contemptible themselves. Their Discourses ought not to be listned unto without nauseousness and detestation. Their Persons should be used as the Lepers were under the Law, whose company every one was obliged to avoid, as being unclean infectious persons. And perhaps this might be one good way, if not of curing themselves, yet of hindring their Mischiefs upon others, when they should find themselves abhorred and abandoned by all sober men.

2. How dear should the Concernments of Religion be to every one of us.

us, How serious should we be in the Profession and Practice of it our selves! How zealous in promoting the Honour and the power of it amongst others! The things of this World are full of uncertainty, and of short continuance, *When a few days are past, we must all of us go to the place whence we shall not return.* And when we come to die, nothing then will be of any advantage to us, but Religion, *The testimony of our Consciences, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our Conversation in this world.* Upon which we may confidently expect, that there is laid up for us a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord the Righteous Judge, will give unto us at the day of his Appearance; when he shall come to bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

FINIS.

## S E R M O N

Preached before the

## K I N G

A T

## WHITE-HALL,

In Lent, 1670.

ECCLES. 12. 14.

*For God shall bring every work into  
judgment, with every secret thing,  
whether it be good, or whether it  
be evil.*

**T**HIS Book doth contain a Philoso-  
phical Disquisition concerning  
a State of Happiness; wherein the  
Wise

Wise man doth particularly discuss each of those Subjects, which according to the various opinions and tempers of men, are believed to have any pretence to it.

The precedent Verse (as I have formerly shewed) doth contain *the Conclusion of the whole matter*; the chief inference and result from all the former Debates and Enquiries; wherein he asserts, that every man's true happiness doth consist in being religious, *In fearing God, and keeping his Commandments.*

And though this Conclusion had been sufficiently proved by great variety of Arguments, in the foregoing Discourse; yet he thinks fit here in the close of all, to back and enforce it with one Argument more; which above all others is most apt to make deep impression upon the minds of men; and (if any thing can) to persuade them to the Duties of Religion: And that is the consideration of the last Judgment, in the words of the Text, *For God shall bring, &c.*

That

That which I intend from these words, is to prove, against the Infidels and Scoffers of this Age, the Reasonableness and the Credibility of this great Principle of Religion, concerning a future State of *Reward* and *Punishment*.

Though the Principal Evidence for this do depend upon Scripture, especially the New Testament, where it is said, That *life and immortality* <sup>2 Tim. 1.</sup> *is brought to light by the Gospel.* <sup>10.</sup>

Yet in a point of so great moment and consequence as this is, it is not to be imagined, that God should have *left himself without a Witness* to all the Nations of the World, but that all men should be endowed with such natural Capacities and Notions, as being improved by Consideration, will afford sufficient evidence for the belief of this great Fundamental Principle.

As for such men, who live under the sense of Guilt, whose Interest it is that there should be no future account, it cannot be otherwise ex-

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pected

pected from such, but that they should be willing to dis-believe this. And from hence it is, that some of the Ancient Philosophers have employed their Learning and Subtilty, to dispute themselves into some kind of doubts and uncertainty about it. And yet the generality even of these have been forced to acknowledg it much more probable than the contrary. And as for the *Vulgar* sort of people, who are guided by the more simple dictates of Nature, these have in all *Ages* and Nations submitted themselves to this Doctrine, and professed a firm belief of it. And though *Vulgar Opinion* be but a very bad Topick about such matters as may gratify men in their ease and sensual appetites ; yet in such other Opinions as are cross to their Worldly Interests, it may argue such things to be from some natural impression upon their minds, which they must believe, and cannot otherwise chuse.

The Arguments I would make use of to this purpose, may be reduced



duced to these three general Heads :

1. From the *suitableness* of this Principle, to *the most natural Notions of our Minds*.

2. The *Necessity* of it, to *the Government of mens Lives and Actions in this World*.

3. The *Necessity* of it, for *the vindication of Divine Providence*.

1. I begin with the first : The *suitableness* of it to *the most natural Notions of our Minds*, and those kind of Impressions which belong to us, as we are Reasonable Creatures. Wee see by experience, that all other things (so far as we are able to judg) *Minerals, Plants, Beasts, &c.* are naturally endowed with such Principles, as are most fit to promote the perfection of their natures in their several Kinds. And therefore it is by no means credible, that *Mankind* only, the most excellent of all the other Creatures in this visible World, for the service of whom, so many other

things seem to be designed, should have such kind of Principles interwoven in his very Nature, as do contain in them meer cheats and delusions. And therefore whatsoever those things are, which the generality of Mankind, especially the most *wise* and the most *considerate* part of them do agree in, ought to be allowed for highly credible; otherwise it must follow, that we are framed with such kind of Faculties, as in our most cautious exercise of them, are more likely to *seduce* us, and expose us to Error, than to *direct* and lead us to the Truth.

But I shall endeavour to manifest this more particularly, by these three Considerations.

1. This Principle is most suitable to the general *Apprehensions* of *Mankind*, concerning the nature of *Good* and *Evil*.

2. To those *natural Hopes* and *Expectations*, which the generality of *good men* have, concerning a state of future *Happiness*.

3. To

3. To those *natural Fears* and Expectations, which the generality of wicked men are possessed with, concerning a *future state of Punishment and Misery*.

1. This Principle is most suitable to the *general Apprehensions of Mankind* concerning the nature of *Good and Evil*. All men heretofore have agreed, that there is such a Thing as the *Law of Nature*, whereby things are distinguished into *Good and Bad*; according to which, the Actions of men are determined to be either *Virtuous* or *Vicious*. And as the one of these, doth in the essence of it imply *Comeliness* and *Reward*; so doth the other denote *Turpitude* and *Punishment*. These things being implied in the very definitions of *Virtue* and *Vice*. And from hence it will follow, That as there is some Superior Power who hath put this Law into our Natures; so will he take care to enforce the observance of it, by rewarding and punishing men accordingly. This being implied in the nature of a Law.

If there be nothing in the naked essence of things that makes them to differ, but what doth meerly arise from *Custom* and *Positive Laws*; why then Custom and Law would be able to render it a very virtuous and commendable thing for a man to be *ingrateful*, a *breaker of Compacts*, a *false Witness*, a *Perjured person*; which is so monstrous a Position, that the common Reason of Mankind will abhor it upon the first proposal. Nothing is more obvious, than that there is an universal desire amongst men, of seeming honesty: The most impudent and profligate Wretch being loth to be esteemed to be, what really he is. The very Sin of Hypocrisie, so general amongst men, doth give a large Testimony to the *Beauty of Goodness*, and the *Deformity of Vice*. Nor is there any account to be given, why there should be impressed upon the nature of men such a value for the one, and dislike for the other, if there were not in the things themselves, something suitable to those contrary affections. We

We see by experience, that there is such a kind of Rest and Acquiescence in the mind, upon the *discovery of Truth*, and the *doing of Virtuous Actions*, as belong to natural Bodies, when they are in their proper places: Which may argue these things to have some peculiar suitableness to the Soul of man, and that the opposites to them do offer violence to some natural Principle belonging to it.

2. This Principle is most suitable to those natural *Hopes* and *Expectations* which the generality of *good men* have concerning a state of *future Happiness*. From whence doth arise that Confidence and Courage, whereby those of meanest Quality and Abilities (if otherwise Virtuous persons) can support themselves in their sufferings for that which is good: Which doth necessarily suppose in them a strong, and even a natural belief and persuasion of such a future state, wherein their sufferings shall be considered and rewarded.

Besides that, there is a natural desire in all men, after a state of *Happiness* and *Perfection*. And if we consider the utter impossibility of attaining to any such condition in this life, This will render it highly credible, That there must be another state wherein this Happiness is attainable: otherwise Mankind must fail of his chief End, being by a natural Principle most strongly inclined to such a state of Happiness as he can never attain to. As if he were purposely framed to be tormented betwixt these two Passions, *Desire* and *Despair*; an earnest Propension after Happiness, and an utter incapacity of ever enjoying it. And, which is yet more considerable, the *better* and the *wiser* any man is, the more earnest desires and hopes hath he after such a state of Happiness. And if there be no such thing, not only *Nature*, but *Virtue* likewise must contribute to make men miserable; than which, nothing can seem more unreasonable to those who believe a Just and a Wise Providence.

3. This

3. This Principle is most suitable to those *Fears* and *Expectations* which the generality of *wicked men* are possessed with, concerning a *future state of Misery*. Witness those natural suggestions of Conscience in the worst of men, that upon any wicked action (though never so private) are often-times startling of them, with the apprehensions of another Judicature and Tribunal, before which they shall be called to an account for their closest sins. All that secret regret, and those inward smitings, *Laniatus* & *Ictus*, which are so often felt in the Minds of men, upon the commission of any great sin, do argue some common intimations, even in the Light of Nature, of another Judgment after this life, wherein they shall be accountable for such Actions, which men do not punish or take notice of.

And these natural Fears do usually seize upon all kind of men promiscuously, even those who are most  
*Potent*

*Potent*, who by their own Wills can give Laws to Nations, and command mighty Armies, yet cannot they avoid these Checks and Lashes of Conscience, but that they will seize upon them, and shake them, as well as the poorest meanest Subject. Nor can such as are most *obstinately wicked*, who with their utmost study and endeavour, apply themselves to the suppressing and disbelief of these Notions; so wholly stifle them, but that they will be continually rising up in their Minds, and pursuing of them.

Now as there is no man whatsoever, that is wholly freed from these fears of future misery after death, so there is no other Creature but Man, that hath any fears of this kind. And if there be no real ground for this, then must it follow, That he who framed all his other Works with such an excellent congruity, did yet so contrive the Nature of Man, the most noble amongst them, as to prove a needless torment and burthen to it self.

If



If it be said, That these *Notions* may proceed from such Principles as men have derived from *Institution*, and the Teaching of others, and do not imply a Necessity of any such *Natural impressions*.

To this it may be answered, That it is sufficient to denominate them *Natural Notions*; if they have such a *suitableness* to the Minds of men, as makes them to be generally owned by all those who apply their thoughts to the consideration of them. And that they have such a natural suitableness, may appear, Because Institution cannot so easily *eradicate* these Notions, as it can *fix* them. Now if the meer teaching of others were it self sufficient to *impress* these Notions, without any such peculiar congruity in the things themselves, It would be as sufficient to *deface* them again : Especially considering the advantage on this side, from that natural repugnancy we have against any thing which brings disquiet to our Minds. And nothing is more troublesome

blesom in this kind, than the Fear which follows upon Guilt.

But now, though there have been several men. of no mean Abilities, in several Ages, who have made it their business to root out of the Minds of men all such troublesome Notions about a future state, endeavouring to perswade themselves and others, That as there was a time before they were born into the world, when they were not; So at their dying, or going out of it, they shall exist no more. And yet, though it be their interest to believe this, though they make it their study and business to perswade themselves and others to it; It may reasonably be doubted, whether ever yet, there hath been so much as one person that hath hereby become absolutely free from these Fears: But for the most part, Those who would have them esteemed vain and imaginary, without any foundation in Nature, These are the persons who are most assaulted with them.

*Hi sunt qui trepidant & ad omnia  
fulgere pallent.* So

So powerful and *unconquerable* are these impressions, and therefore *natural*.

2. The second Reason I proposed to speak to, was from *the Necessity of this Principle, to the right government of mens Lives and Actions in this world*, and the preserving of Society amongst them.

Nothing can be more evident, than that the Human Nature is so framed, as not to be regulated and kept within due bounds, without *Laws*; and Laws must be insignificant, without the Sanctions of *Rewards* and *Punishments*, whereby men may be necessitated to the observance of them. Now the temporal Rewards and Punishments of this life, cannot be sufficient to this end; and therefore there is a necessity, that there should be another future state of Happiness and Misery.

All the Rewards and Punishments of this life, are to be expected either from the *Civil Magistrate*, who by virtue of his Place and Calling is obliged

obliged to the duty of distributive Justice : Or else from *Divine Providence*, according to that most usual course which we find by Experience to be observed by Him, in his dispensation of these Temporal things. Now neither of these can afford sufficient Motives for the government of Mens Lives and Actions.

1. Not all that may be expected from the *Civil Magistrate*, because there may be many good and evil Actions, which they cannot take notice of ; and they can reward and punish only such things as come under their cognizance. And if this were the only restraint upon men, it could be no hindrance from any such Mischief or Villanies which men had the opportunity of committing secretly. Nor would it extend to those who had Power and Strength enough to defend themselves from the Law, and escape the penalty of it, but that such might without any check or fear, follow the inclinations of their own Appetites. Nor would it afford any  
remedy

remedy in the case of such wicked Magistrates as should invert the order of their Institution, proving *Terrors to well-doers*, and *Encouragers to those that do ill*.

2, Not all that may be expected from *Common Providence*: For though it should be granted, that according to the most usual and general course of things, both Virtuous and Vitious Actions are rewarded and punished in this life; yet there may be many particular cases which this Motive would not reach unto; namely, all such cases where a man's Reason shall inform him, that there is far greater probability of safety and advantage, by committing a sin, than can be reasonably expected, (according to his experience of the usual course of things in the World,) by doing his duty. Suppose the case of the three Children, or of any others called to Martyrdom, who may be threatned with torments and death, unless they will blaspheme God, and renounce their Religion, If it appear to them  
very

very *probable*, suppose a hundred to one, that upon their refusal, Their Persecutors will really execute what they Threaten: And if on the other side it appear very *improbable*, suppose ten thousand to one, that they shall not be delivered by a Miracle: In such cases, it is not to be expected that the consideration of the ordinary course of Providence in the dispensation of Rewards and Punishments, should be sufficient to restrain a man from any kind of Blasphemy or Villany whatsoever.

But the thing I am speaking to, will more fully appear, by consideration of those horrid Mischiefs of all kinds, that would most naturally follow from the denial of this Doctrine.

If there be no such thing to be expected as Happiness or Misery hereafter, Why then the only business that men are to take care of, is their present well-being in this World; There being nothing to be counted either *Good* or *Bad*, but in order to this.

this. Those things which we conceive to be conducive to it, being the only *duties* ; and all other things that are cross to it, being the only *sins*. And therefore whatever a man's Appetite shall incline him to, he ought not to deny himself in it (be the thing what it will) so he can have it, or do it without probable danger.

Suppose it be matter of *Gain* or *Profit* he is disposed to, if he can cheat or steal securely, this will be so far from being a *fault*, that it is plainly his *duty*, Because it is a proper means to promote his chief End,

And so for other cases of *Anger*, *Hatred*, *Revenge*, &c. according to this Principle, a man must take the first opportunity of satisfying these Passions, by doing any kind of mischief to the persons he is offended with, whether by *false Accusations* and *Perjury* ; or (if need be) by *poisoning* or *stabbing* of them ; provided he can do these things so, as to escape  
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the fuspition of others, and Human Penalty.

Now let any man judg, what *Bears*, and *Wolves*, and *Devils*, men would prove to one another, if every thing should be not only *lawful*, but a *duty*, whereby they might gratifie their impetuous Lusts, if they might either perjure themselves, or steal, or murder, as often as they could do it safely, and get any advantage by it.

But these things are so very obvious, and undeniable, that the most prophane Atheistical persons do own the truth of them. And upon this, they are willing to acknowledg, That *Religion* and the *belief of another life*, is a very politick invention, and needful for the well-governing of the world, and for the keeping men in awe, from the doing any secret mischiefs. Which (by the way) is a concession of no small advantage to the honour of Religion, considering that it proceeds from the greatest professed Enemies to it. Whereby they



they grant, that it is fit these things *should be true*, if they are not ; or at least that it is fit, that the generality of men should *believe them to be true*. And though they themselves *pretend* to believe otherwise, yet are they not so far out of their wits, as to be willing that those with whom they converse, their Wives, and Children, and Servants, should be of the same Opinion with them, Because then they could have no reason to expect any safety amongst them. What security could any man have of his Estate, or Honour, or Life, if such with whom he is most familiar and intimate, might think themselves at liberty to do all the secret mischiefs to them, that they had opportunity to commir ?

But there is one thing more, which those, who profess to dis-belief this Principle, should do well to consider; and that is this, That there is no imaginable reason, why (amongst those that know them) they should pretend to any kind of *Honesty* or

*Conscience*, because they are wholly destitute of all such motives as may be sufficient to oblige them to any thing of this nature. But according to them, that which is called *Virtue* and *Religion*, must be one of the most silly and useless things in the world.

As for the Principle of *Honour*, which some imagine may supply the room of *Conscience*, This relates only to external Reputation, and the esteem which we have amongst others ; And therefore can be of no influence to restrain men from doing any secret mischief.

From what hath been said, it will follow, That those who have any regard to their own safeties, ought to abandon all kind of society with such pernicious persons, who according to their own Principles, must take all opportunities of doing any mischief to others, which they are able to effect, with any advantage to themselves.

Now if this be so (as I have proved)

ved) that the nature of man is so framed, as not to be effectually perswaded and wrought upon, without the consideration of such a future state. If it be necessary to put in everlasting motives, as the Sanctions of that Law, by which the Human Nature is to be governed ; This must render it highly credible, that there is such a state. Because it must needs be very unworthy of God, to conceive of Him, that he hath contrived the nature of one of his best and most noble Creatures, after such a manner, as to make it incapable of being governed without falshood and deceit.

3. The third and last Argument I proposed to speak to, was from the necessity of this Principle to the *vindication of Divine Providence*. Nothing is more universally acknowledged, than that God is *Good* and *Just*. That well-doing shall be rewarded, and evil Actions punished by Him. And yet we see that his Dispensations in this life are many

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times



I Cor. 15.  
19.

times promiscuous and uncertain : so that a man cannot judg of love or hatred by all that is before him. The worst men are sometimes in the best condition. *If in this life only we had hope, we should be of all men the most miserable,* saith the Apostle; speaking concerning those primitive times of Persecution, when the better any man was, the more he was exposed to sufferings.

Now the greater *Uncertainty* there is as to the *present Affairs* in this World, by so much greater is the *Certainty* of a *future Judgment*.

What could be a greater disparagement to Divine Providence, than to permit the Calamities and Sufferings which good men undergo in this world, many times upon the account of Religion, to pass *unrewarded*; and the many Mischiefs and Prophana-tions, which wicked men take the advantage of committing, by their Greatness and Prosperity in this world, to go *unpunished*?

What

What great glory would it be, to preside over this Material World, *Stars*, and *Meteors*, *Sea* and *Land*, *Plants* and *Beasts*, to put these things into such a regular course, as may be suitable to their natures, and the operations for which they are designed ; and in the mean space to have no proportionable regard, either for those that *reverence the Deity*, or those who *contemn him*?

'Tis very well said to this purpose by a late Author, That not to conduct the course of *Nature* in a due manner, might speak some defect of *Wisdom* in God : but not to compensate *Virtue* and *Vice*, besides the defect of *Wisdom*, in not adjusting things suitably to their qualifications, but crossly coupling Prosperity with Vice, and Misery with Virtue, would argue too great a defect of *Goodness* and *Justice*. And perhaps it would be less expedient (saith he) with *Epicurus*, to deny all Providence, than to ascribe it to such defects. It being less unworthy of the Divine Na-  
G 4
ture,

ture, to neglect the Universe altogether, than to administer Human Affairs with so much Injustice and Irregularity.

Pfal. 58.  
11.

And therefore 'tis necessary for the vindication of Divine Providence, that there should be a future state and day of Account, wherein every man shall be forced to acknowledg, that *verily there is a reward for the righteous; doubtless there is a God that judgeth the earth.*

I crave leave for a word of Application, and I have done. If this be so, it will concern us then to enquire,

I. Whether we do in good earnest *believe* this, That there shall be a future state of Reward and Punishment, according as mens Lives and Actions have been in this world. If not, why do we profess our selves to be Christians? Why do we not renounce the Articles of our Creed? Nay, why do we pretend to any Religion? Nothing can be more false and unworthy, than in a solemn and  
reli-

religious manner to own that in our Profession, which we do inwardly disbelieve and deny.

2. Do we at any time seriously *consider* this? and revolve upon it in our minds? Do we bethink our selves, what our condition is like to be at that time, what preparations we have for it. what grounds we have for hope? There cannot possibly be any greater stupidity, than for a man to be slight and careless in a business of so great moment. 'Tis the want of believing and considering this, that is the chief cause of all the viciousness and disorder in the world.

3. What *impression* doth the belief and consideration of this make *upon our hearts and lives*? Doth it stir up in us, *vehement desires*, and *carefulness of mind* in preparing for that time? If a man were to be tried for life at the next Assizes, How would his thoughts be taken up about his defence, what answer he should make, what the main Plea is which he should insist upon, by what evidence  
it

it might be strengthened and cleared up? He would as soon forget to eat his meat, or to go to bed, as to let a business of this nature slip out of his mind.

There is nothing more hard to be restrained, than the Impetuous and wild Exorbitances of Youth; And yet such persons *would not, durst not* indulge themselves, according to *the ways of their own hearts, and the sight of their eyes*; If they did really believe and consider, that ~~for~~ *all* Eccl. 11. 9. *these things God would bring them to judgment.*

The business of Religion, must therefore be above all other things of greatest consequence to us, because 'tis the only means to secure us, as to our future conditions. The affairs of this life are but of short continuance, and full of uncertainty: And therefore 'tis not much material what a man's condition may be in that respect. But there is another state and time which will more nearly concern our care; and that



that is the great day of Account, And till a man hath in some measure provided for this, he cannot live comfortably, or sleezy quietly, or have any solid peace in his mind ; but must upon every serious reflexion be continually haunted with frightful apprehensions about his everlasting condition.

"Tis scarce credible that any man should be so fortish, as to think, he shall escape dying : and when we do come to depart out of this world, It will then be no advantage to us, that we have had Riches, or Honour, or Power. These things will then vanish away, as to our *Possession* of them ; and the *Remembrance* of them may prove a torment to our thoughts, rather than a comfort ; especially if we have reason to suspect, that these things were our *portion in this life*, and may be reckoned upon as *our good things which we had already*. Certain It is, that they will render our Accounts the more difficult : For to whom much is given, of them  
much

much shall be required. We must be answerable not only for our *doings*,  
 Jer. 17. 10 but for *the fruit of our doings*. All the sins, or evil consequences which have been occasioned by our Miscarriages, shall be set upon our score.

2 Pet. 3. 11, 12. And if these things be so. *What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for, and hastning unto the coming of the day of God.* If any thing

Tit. 2. 12, 13. can prevail with men *to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world,* It must be from the consideration of that *blessed hope and glorious appearing of the Great God, our Saviour Jesus Christ* : To whom with the Father, &c.

F I N I S.

A  
DISCOURSE  
Concerning the  
BEAUTY  
OF  
Providence.

---

By the Right Reverend Father in  
God, *JOHN WILKINS*, late  
Lord Bishop of *Chester*.

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*Pfal. 25. 10. All the paths of the Lord are  
mercy and truth, to such as keep his Cove-  
nant and his Testimonies.*

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The Fifth Edition.

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LONDON:

Printed by *Henry Graftenden*, 1677.

DISCOURSE

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THE  
PREFACE  
TO THE  
READER.

**A**mongst all other Doctrines, this of Providence (though it do properly belong to Natural Theology. yet) is of an Universal concernment both for knowledge and practice, as any other point, in Christian Divinity,

The very Heathens have acknowledged, only a Universal Providence of God, which puts the general kinds of things into a regular way of working; But his particular Providence likewise, which takes care of Individual Persons and Actions. Why else do all Religions oblige men to pray  
unto

## To the Reader.

unto Him, and to expect His special assistance in every kind of want or necessity?

But now, though this common Principle be so universally acknowledged in the Notion of it, yet men are generally very negligent in the practical application of it to particular times and conditions; and so lose that comfort and satisfaction that may be reaped from it.

It is the chief aim and business of this Discourse, To convince and quicken men unto this duty, as being by so much the more seasonable for these times, by how much the present troubles and confusions do now call upon us for it.

It cannot but occasion some suggestions of Diffidence and Infidelity, to consider those many strange revolutions and changes in the world. which in outward appearance seem so full of disorder and wild contingencies. And therefore it must needs be of special consequence for a man to have his heart established in the knowledg  
and

## To the Reader.

and belief of this truth here insisted upon :

In all Ages of the world men have <sup>Psal. 73.</sup>  
been much startled in their judgments <sup>Jer. 12.</sup>  
by that unequal dispensation which  
seems to be in those outward things,  
That one event should be to the righte- <sup>Eccles. 9. 2.</sup>  
ous and the wicked. Nay, That <sup>Ch. 5. 15.</sup>  
a just man should perish in his right- <sup>Ch. 8. 14.</sup>  
eousness. and the wicked should  
prosper in his wickedness. That <sup>Ch. 4. v. 11</sup>  
on the side of the Oppressor there  
should be might, and the oppressed  
should have none to comfort them.  
This hath sometimes so amazed and  
perplexed the thoughts of considering  
men, that whilst they looked barely  
upon events, they could not tell how  
to extricate themselves from these  
difficulties ; which occasioned that  
speech of Solomon ; Surely oppression <sup>Ch. 7. v. 7.</sup>  
makes a wise man mad ; that is, puts  
him to his wits end, transports him  
with wild imaginations, whilst he  
knows not readily what to answer in  
defence of such proceedings.

H

But

## To the Reader.

But now be that shall seriously consider how every thing is managed by an All-seeing Providence, which is exactly careful, and infinitely wise, such a man will be easily satisfied, that in all these obscure administrations (which seem unto us so full of casual, negligent, promiscuous Events) there is an admirable (though unsearchable) contrivance.

As for the particular design which Providence may aim at in some dispensations, this doth not always fall  
Pro. 25. 2. under our reach. It is the glory of

God to conceal a matter. And many of his works are so ordered, that  
Eccl. 8. 7. though a man labour to seek them  
1. out, yet he cannot find out, yet he shall not find them. Tea further, Though a wise man think to know them, yet shall he not be able to find them. And therefore, where we cannot understand his ways, it is there our duty, with an humble reverence to admire the wisdom of them.

How would this (if rightly considered



## To the Reader.

*sidered and applied) silence all those unseemly murmurings and complaints of men in these times? Remember, there is nothing befalls us but what Act. 4. 28. the counsel of God had before determined to be done. And he can order things for the best, as well when they cross our desires, as when they comply with them.*

*And therefore when you see the* Eccl. 5. 8.  
*violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter. That is, Be not transported with wonder, or impatience, or unbelief; as if the Providence of God were regardless or negligent: For he that is higher than the highest regardeth. Though they that have the highest power amongst men may be so far from remedying, that they rather encourage such disorders; yet God hath a strict watchful eye upon them. And though men may be apt to secure themselves in such proceedings, by the greatness of their own strength; as if there were nothing above them; yet there are*  

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higher

## To the Reader.

Ch. 3. 27. higher than they. *And there is a time, when God will judge both the righteous and the wicked.*

*Let us be careful of our own duty, to serve Providence in the usual means, and leave the disposal of events to him. It should be every mans chief business to clear up the evidences of his particular title and relation unto this great Governour of the World; and this will be the surest means to set us above the fear or hurt of all outward changes.*

*We see with what artifice and compliance men will insinuate themselves into the affection of those who (according to several revolutions) are advanced into the places of power. Of how much greater advantage would it be, to get an interest in his favour who doth and shall always rule over the sons of men, having all times at his disposal, out of whose hands no strength or policy shall ever be able to wrest the sway and dominion of things?*

*It*

## To the Reader.

*It cannot but afford strong consolation unto every true Believer, to consider, that he who hath the chief influence in all these great changes and variety of events in the World, is both his God, and his Father.*

*How did this quiet the heart of old Eli? 1 Sam. 3. 18. It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good. And David upon the same consideration professeth, I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it. And our blessed Saviour himself makes use of this argument, The Cup that my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? Though the portion be bitter and displeasing, yet so long as it comes from a loving and careful Father, we have no reason to fear any hurt by it.*

*And on the other side, much of mens inquietness and dejection, is occasioned either by the want of this evidence, or by the neglect of applying it. When they terminate their thoughts upon secondary instruments, Fearing men that shall die, and the sons of men*

## To the Reader.

men that shall be made as grass : forgetting the Lord their Maker, who stretched forth the Heavens, and laid the Foundations of the earth. *That is that which makes men to fear continually, because of the fury of the oppressor.*

*How would it compose all these fears and distempers, if men would but labour after this assurance of their interest in God, with the same zeal and intention of mind wherewith they prosecute their particular engagements and animosities against one another. He that hath God for his strength and refuge, is always sure to be on the strongest side, and need not fear the most tempestuous mutations. Though the earth be removed, and the Mountains should be carried into the midst of the Sea : Though the waters thereof roar, and be troubled ; and the Mountains shake with the swelling thereof.*

*Thus much I thought fit to premise in the general, concerning the necessity and seasonableness of this Subject,*  
*As*

## To the Reader.

*As for the particular occasion of publishing this Discourse, I have nothing to say but this; That being solicited for a Copy of it by divers persons (and some of eminent quality) before whom it was occasionally Preached; I knew not any more convenient way to satisfy their desires, than by such a publick communication of it.*

*I could speak something from my own experience concerning the efficacy of this Doctrine, against those damps and dejections of mind unto which such times as these will expose a man, It is my hearty Prayer, that it may be useful to others also in this respect.*

Farewel.

# To the Reader.

THESE are the first of a series of  
lectures, delivered at the  
University of Cambridge, in the  
year 1840, on the subject of  
the history of the human mind.  
The lectures were delivered  
by the late Professor of  
Mental Philosophy, and were  
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THE  
BEAUTY  
OF  
Providence.

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ECCLES. 3. 11.

*He hath made every thing beautiful  
in his time : also He hath set the  
World in their heart, yet no man  
can find out the work that God  
maketh from the beginning to the  
end.*

**T**His Book contains Solomon's Ex-  
perience in his search for Con-  
tentment ; which being not to be  
found amongst any of the Creatures,  
he advises never to trouble our selves  
in

in an eager prosecution after them, but to enjoy our possessions with a cheerful, liberal mind, without perplexing our selves in such cares and labours, as may defraud us of those honest comforts to be had by them : *for there is nothing better for a man, then that he should eat and drink, and make his Soul enjoy good in his labour,* ch. 2. v. 24. That is one of the *Conclusions* which Solomon infers from his former discourse, and which he farther amplifies, and confirms in the following parts of his Sermon. It being his chief scope in this Book, to direct men how to behave themselves with cheerfulness and contentment under all those great revolutions, and that variety of events which may befall them in the world.

This *Chapter* contains a discourse concerning God's government and disposal of times; and is therefore not unfitly stiled, the *Calendar* or *Ephemerides* of seasons : whence the Wise-man with divers arguments urges upon us what he had before commended



mended, a cheerful and contented mind.

The Text is one of these arguments; *God hath made every thing beautiful in his time*: that is, there is a wise order and contrivance in all the works of providence: every particular Event is most seasonable in that time which God appoints: and therefore we have no reason to repine at our condition, as if matters did not go well with us; for 'tis impossible they should have been better than they are: though they do cross our private hopes and desires, yet God best understands the fittest order and season for all things making them beautiful in his time.

*Also he hath set the World in their heart*: by [*world*] here is not meant this material world; but *seculum*, the succession and course of things, as the original word עולם does properly import. This God hath set in, or \* *expounded* unto mens hearts; that is, he hath endowed us with an ability to discern in some measure that

that seasonableness which he observes in the government of the World.

*Yet there is no man can find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end: that is, 'tis above humane ability to comprehend the reason of all Divine proceedings; we cannot find them fully out from the beginning to the end.*

This very  
suitable  
to the O-  
riginal.

Others conceive that the words may be more properly rendred thus: *as long as the World shall last, God doth reveal unto mens hearts the work which he makes, from the beginning to the end, excepting only some things unto which man cannot attain.* As if he should have said, in all ages of the World there are still some passages of Providence, wherein men may be able to discern a beauty and comeliness, though there are some other particulars which we cannot understand. The sense of both Interpretations being for the substance much alike.

That's the connexion and meaning of the whole verse. The Text, according

cording to its natural fulness, doth comprize in it these three particulars.

1. Every thing has its time.
2. Every thing in its time is beautiful.
3. That is the proper season for all things which God appoints.

1. Every thing has its time. *To all things there is an appointed season,* ver. 1. Not only for such natural events as bear in them a kind of necessity, *as a time to be born, and a time to dye,* ver. 2. but also for those *voluntary* actions that seem to be most alterable and contingent; *A time to weep, and a time to laugh,* ver. 4. The wisdom of Providence in the government of this lower world, hath disposed to every thing its particular season. This is that we call the *fulness* of time, the *ripeness* of season. *Prov. 27, 1.* The Wise man says there, that the day brings forth events, *Paritura est dies*; alluding to a teeming-Mother, to whom.

there

there is a set date for her delivery. So doth Time travel with the decrees of Providence, and for each several action there is a pregnancy, and fulness of time.

2. Every thing in its time is beautiful; even such matters as in their own natures are not without some deformity. *A time to kill*, v. 4. *A time to mourn*, *a time of war*, v. 8. The scorching of Summer, and the extreame cold of Winter, though both in themselves alike distastful, yet are comely in their seasons; and those times would not be so beautiful without them. Nor is it the natural goodness of any thing that can make it comely out of its proper season. That which *Beauty* is in Bodies, and *Harmony* in Sounds, that is *Opportunity* in Time. Now as White and Red, which are the usual Materials of *Beauty*, as those particular Notes of which *Musick* doth consist, may be so disposed of, as to cause *deformity* and *discord*: so actions, which in themselves are good, may be depraved

ved by their unseasonableness.

3. That is the proper season for all things which God appoints: Or thus: Every particular Event, is most beautiful in that time which the Providence of God hath allotted to it. 'Tis above the contrivance of Human Policy to bring matters about in their fittest order. And therefore 'twere but folly to conclude, That things do not fall out well, unless they answer our desires: for God best understands the fittest season for every purpose. And whatsoever, or whensoever he works, you may be sure 'tis both beautiful, and in its time; Even those Events which do most thwart our private Ends (could all circumstances be duly considered) we should find them to be performed in their most comely order, and best opportunity.

As for the two first Particulars, though they are implied in the Text, yet are they most expressly handled in the former *verses*: And therefore I shall pass them over without any fur-

ther enlargement, insisting only upon this latter, as being more directly agreeable to the main scope of the words.

And 'tis a Subject that in many respects will deserve your more especial attention; 'tis not commonly treated of. And besides, it may very much conduce to our contentment; to settle our hearts against all those conditions that may befall us in the World. 'Tis of very general use and concernment, suitable to all times and occasions: For times of *suffering*, to make us patient and submissive: For times of *mercy*, to make us cheerful and thankful. In brief, it extends to all persons, relations, businesses, seasons; nothing is more generally useful than this, to have our hearts fully perswaded of that wise order and contrivance which there is in the the disposal of every particular Event in the World, And 'tis more especially seasonable for times of Trouble and Confusion, when men are apt to mistrust the  
Go.

Government of *Providence*, as if God neglect the care of this lower world, and leave all things to their own jarring principles. Then (I say) 'tis more especially seasonable to vindicate the care and wisdom of Providence; to shew that every thing God doth, is best; and consequently, that those many distractions and confusions under which we suffer, are far better than any other (though the most flourishing) condition could be. And that's the Subject I am now to insist upon. The point is this:

*Every particular Event is most beautiful in that time which the Providence of God hath allotted to it.*

A Truth, by so much the more seasonable for these times, by how much 'tis now the more difficult to believe it.

The Observation lies plainly both in the scope of the place, and the most obvious sense of the words.

I

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Confir-  
mation by  
Testimo-  
ny Divine.

The Scripture is copious in other proofs to this purpose. *Deut. 32. 4: His work is perfect, and his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right.* Not only his first work of Creation is exactly good and perfect; but his ways of Providence also are disposed with judgment and righteousness.

So Jer.  
32. 19.

So again, *Isa. 28. 29. The Lord of Hosts is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working; that is, every event of Providence is managed and pre-ordained by an admirable Wisdom, and therefore must needs be of excellent contrivance.*

And again, *Dan. 2. 20, 21. Wisdom and might are his: he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth Kings, and he setteth up Kings:* Those two Attributes of Strength and Wisdom are for the most part put together in Scripture. God never shews any Argument of his Strength, but his Wisdom is engaged in it also. Those great alterations and



and subversions which happen in the world, do not more demonstrate the greatness of his *Power* in the doing of them, than the greatness of his *Wisdom* in disposing of them for the best.

And again, *Psal. 104. 24. O Lord, how manifold are thy works? in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.* Which is as well true of the works of *Providence*, as of the works of *Creation*.

But this Truth is more directly intimated by that Vision of *Ezekiel* in the Chapter of his Prophecy, wherein he doth express how all Events in the world are wisely disposed of by the care and government of Providence. The scope of that Vision was, to confirm the faith of the Prophet in the certainty of those things which he was to foretel; because God himself, by whom he was inspired, had such a special influence in the orderly managing of all inferiour Events.

I 2

Though

2 Chron.  
16. 9.  
Prov. 15.  
3.  
ver. 10.

Though matters might seem to run upon wheels (as we say), to follow their own courses, without any special guidance; to go at random; yet *these wheels have eyes in them*, v. 18. that is, there is the eye of Providence, which directs them in their revolutions. And then besides, these wheels are likewise governed by the four living creatures; that is by the Angels of God, who are fitted for all their services, with four remarkable Endowments.

1. With Wisdom and Prudence, typified in that Vision, by the *face of a man*.

2. Courage and Resolution, the *face of a Lion*.

3. Sedulity and Diligence, the *face of an Ox*.

4. Swiftnes and Dispatch, the *face of an Eagle*.

In all which, the Prophet doth at large explain unto us, with what deliberate care and fore-cast the Providence of God doth dispose of all these inferior Events.

This

This Truth may yet be further evidenced, from the very Light of Nature, and the Testimony of the Heathen. Hence was it that the Ancients did set forth their gods with Harps in their hands, to shew the harmony they observed in the government of the world. And *Midas* Bacon's Sap. Vet. was condemned to wear Asses ears, because he preferred *Pan's* Pipe before *Apollo's* Lute; Humane Policy before Divine Providence.

Nay the Devil himself doth acknowledge the wisdom and seasonableness of Divine proceedings, and therefore would fain have shetred himself under this pretence: *Matth. 8. 29. Art thou come to torment us before our time?* Implied, that it would not become the God of Order to do any thing untimely. And doubtless that must needs be an evident and a great Truth which is confessed by the mouth of so great a Liar.

For the further confirmation of this, let us a little consider some of those

those rugged passages of Providence which seem to be performed with the greatest negligence and deformity.

**Examples** *Look upon the History of Joseph:* He was (you know) one of the promised Seed, concerning whom God had foretold a superiority and dominion over the rest of his Family. Now, that after this, he should be exposed to the treachery of his malicious Brethren: that besides his nearness to slaughter from their hands, he should be sold into a far Countrey, whence there was no hopes ever to hear on him again; That there he should be so endangered by the rage of a lustful woman, and suffer so tedious and unjust Imprisonment; all this might seem to be an oversight and neglect of Providence, as if it had forgotten the promotion which *Joseph* was designed to. And yet do but reflect upon the latter part of the story, and you shall find, how all these misfortunes did mightily conduce,

not

not only to his advancement, but all to the safety and preservation of that whole Family, which was then the Visible Church. So that if each of his Brethren had given him as much money as they sold him for, it had not been so great a kindness as he received from their intended Cruelty.

It is an elegant gloss of St. Gregory upon this Story, *Divino iudicio quod declinare conati sunt, renitendo servaverunt: Ideo venditus est à fratribus Joseph ne adoraretur, sed ideo est adoratus, quia venditus.* It was so ordered by Providence, that what they sought to decline, they did promote, even by their striving against it; Joseph was therefore sold by his Brethren, that he might not be worshiped, and yet he was therefore worshiped, because he was sold. *Sic divinum consilium dum deviat, impletur; sic humana sapientia dum reluctatur, comprehenditur.* Even so the Divine Council is accomplished in being opposed; so Hu-

mane Policy is defeated by the means of promoting it.

Thus also is it in the History of *David*: He was (you know) designed to a Kingdom; but how many straits was he put to before he attained it? Being forced into the Wilderness like a wandring Out-law, and followed there by a company of discontented persons, who was as ready (perhaps) upon every trivial occasion to revolt from him, as before from *Saul*. But, above all the rest, his last distress was the one of the most desperate, when he was spoiled at *Ziglag*, not only of his goods, but his Wives and Children too, when his own Souldiers in their mutiny and discontent were ready to stone him; there being then but little hopes to save his life, much less to get a Kingdom. And yet this distress also was, in the event of it, contrived to his advantage. For having afterwards pursued the *Amalekites*, he not only recovered his own, but got such abundance of other spoils

spoils from them, as served him for rich Presents, whereby he might renew and confirm the friendship of his wellwishers in *Israel*; that after the death of *Saul* ( which presently followed ) he might by their free votes be chose to succeed him, 1 *Sam.* 30. and *chap.* 31.

You may observe likewise somewhat to this purpose in the story of *Jonah*, when he was sent to *Nineveh* about so weighty a matter as the safety of that great and populous City, and that too when their destruction was within ken, but forty days off; that he should now make delays and fly to *Tarshish*; that upon such a strait he should run himself into hazards, might seem to argue some carelessness and neglect in the Government of Providence. And yet this error of his was so wisely managed in the event, that it proved a great advantage to the main End of his business. For 'tis a probable opinion, That these Mariners who cast *Jonah* into the Sea, were a spe-

special occasion that his Preaching was so successful afterwards; the *Nazarenes* being by them informed, That this was that Prophet for whom they had lately suffered so violent a Tempest; how the wind ceased, and all was calm again, when they had once cast him into the Sea from whence it was not possible he should be delivered, but by a Miracle. And therefore they concluded, That this must needs be some man extraordinarily inspired from above; and that his Preaching was not idle Threats, but such as might justly fright them into that rigorous Fast which afterwards we read of, both for Man and Beast. It being the wisdom of Providence so to contrive it that this offence of *Jonah* should mightily advantage that End which it did seem most directly to oppose.

So likewise for that dissention betwixt *Paul* and *Barnabas*, *Act. 15.* it might seem the most unseasonable breach that could possibly be imagined; when the Church of the Christians



ans was now in its beginning and infancy, that then the two chief Members of it should fall at variance amongst themselves, was such an untimely dissention, that an Enemy could not wish them worse. Nothing could more thwart the promulgation of the Gospel of Peace, than the contentions of those that preach it. If that State which is already established into a Kingdom, *divided against it self, cannot stand*; much less could those small beginnings think to encrease into a Church by divisions. Mat. 12.  
25.

And yet this likewise was so disposed of in the event, that it did mightily conduce to the Gospel thorow the whole world: for by this means those two parted asunder, the one into *Cyprus*, the other into *Syria and Cilicia*, Ver. 39,  
40, 41. and like two mighty streams spread themselves several ways that so they might the better water the barren and thirsty corners of the world.

Thus have you seen the Beauty of Providence in some rugged passages of

of it. 'Tis so in every other particular, though seeming unto us neyer so deformed. *But man cannot find out the work of God from the beginning to the end.*

Confirmation  
by Reason.

For the further evidencing of this truth, there are two grounds upon which 'tis bottomed, that being understood and considered, will make the point very clear.

1. God is exactly careful of every thing.

Reas. 1. 2. He is infinitely wise, for the disposal of all to the best.

1. God doth overlook all things by an especial Providence. Eph. 1. 11. *He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.* There is no event in the World it is ordered both according to God's will, and by his counsel: Psal. 135. 6. *Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he both in Heaven, and in Earth, and in the Sea, and in all deep places.* Not only in the Heaven, where his glory is more especially conspicuous; but in the earth too, where matters seem to be  
full

full of confusion: *and in the Sea, and in all deep places*, where we cannot so much as take notice of them. There is nothing so *great*, but is under his *Power*; nothing so *little*, but is within his *Care*. Those actions and events that seem unto us most *free, and casual, inconsiderable*, are all of them ordered by his Providence.

1. That which is *most free*, the hearts and affections of men do follow the guidance of his Decrees; Men may do after their own counsels and inclinations; but they are still suitable to his Providence; there is nothing more in our thoughts and words; and yet both *the preparation of the heart, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord*, Prov. 16. 1.

2. That which seems most *casual*: *The disposing the Lot is from him*, Prov. 16. 33. He who is accidentally slain by another, is said to *be delivered into his hands by God*, Exod. 21. 13. That casual Arrow shot at random, was directed by Providence to fulfil the prediction of *Ahab's death*,  
1 King.

1 King. 22. 34. There is no liberty for Causes to operate in a loose and stragling way; but in matters of greatest uncertainty, there is a pre-ordained course of Effects.

\*Like  
that of  
the Poet,  
*Non vacat  
exiguus re-  
bus adesse  
Jovi.*

3. *The least, most inconsiderable things*, are not neglected by Providence. It was a \* prophane speech of the *Aramites*, *That God was the God of the Mountains, not of the Valleys*, 1 King. 20. 23. Whereas he regards *the lowest, the least thing*, as well as the greatest. The young *Lions*, Psal. 104. 21. The *Ravens*, Psal. 147. 9. are provided for by him. He feeds the *Fowls of the air*, adorns the *Lillies*, and clothes the *Grass of the Field*, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the *Oven*. Sparrows (you know) are but cheap Birds; *Are not two of them sold for a farthing?* Mat. 10. 29. *And yet not one of these do fall to the ground without your Father*. He must give the *Fowler* leave to kill them; nay, when they are upon the wing in their frequent and often repeated motions; yet

yet then it is He that must appoint them the time and place when and where they shall settle; and in this sense also, *not one of them doth fall to the ground without your father*. The hairs of your head are yet less observable contemptible even to a Proverb, *Pili non facio, Ne pilo quidem melius*. And yet these, with God, are *inter numerata*, amongst those things whereof he takes an exact account.

That place 1 Cor 9. 9. *Doth God take care for Oxen?* doth not simply exempt such things from the Law of his providence; but 'tis *Argumentum a minori*, and doth imply his especial care of that higher rank of creatures to whom these are subordinate. The plain meaning of it is, that if God hath by a particular Law provided, *that the Ox should not be muzzled that treads out the corn*; he will be much more careful of the Labourers in his Harvest.

'Tis recorded to the glory of some ancient Generals, that they were able

to call every common Souldier by his own name ; and careful to provide not only *Pay* for their Captains, but *Litter* also for the meanest Beast that did serve the Camp. Now you know there is not any Creature but is a Souldier to the Lord of Hosts. He doth sometimes muster up an Army of Lice and Flies ; and therefore 'tis but reason that his Providence should take care for such things also : why should it not be as great an argument of his Power to preserve and *order* these lesser Creatures, as it was at first to *make them* ? The Creation of a glorious Angel did not cost him more than that of a despicable Fly. Was it not He that out of the same primitive nothing put that difference which there is amongst several natures ? And if the Painter in the same Piece draw a silken and a woollen garment, why should he value the one above the other, since it was the same Art that did both make and distinguish them ?

2. As his *Providence* doth extend <sup>Real. 1.</sup> to all things, so likewise does his *Wisdom*. As he is exactly careful, so is he infinitely wise; and therefore as able for the contrivance of every the least particular thing, as he would be if he had nothing but that to look after. If the Providence of God had but *one project* on foot, we could easily conceive how he might be able to drive that through all the windings and circumstances of it, with care and wisdom. Nay, we would trust any wise man with the managing of a *single business*; when he had nothing else to distract his endeavours: But for all those multitude of affairs amongst Men and Angels; nay, for the very *circumstances* and *manner* of all those several actions and motions which are performed in every moment of time through the whole World; we cannot conceive but that in such a tumult of business the eye of Providence may be sometimes overseen. But this arises from our mistake of the Divine Nature; we

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measure

measuring God by our own *finite abilities*; whereas we should consider, that that which is *infinite*, cannot be confined by Time, or Number, or Place; but is as well able at all times to look to all things, in all places, as if there were only one business to be cared for. You may see some imperfect resemblance of this amongst the Creatures. Do but consider the *Sun*, how that at the same time, without labour or confusion, it is employed in divers services for all the Creatures under Heaven; the distinctions of Seasons, the growth of several Plants, its various influence upon Minerals, the cherishing of living Creatures, with sundry other such variety of employments, which we are not able so much as to take notice of. Or else, do but mark the nature of the *Soul*, which at the same time perhaps doth *contemplate* Heaven, *direct* the body in its sundry motions, *distribute* the food in a wise proportion to the several parts, not neglecting so much as the least hair about it, but supplying that



that with suitable nourishment. And all this it does without weariness or distraction. And if a Creature can do thus, much more then the Creator, who gives to every thing its proper ability, and doth actuate all things by a more immediate assistance than the Soul it self. So that though we suppose *infinite occasions*, (which notwithstanding Creatures are not capable of) yet the Providence and Wisdom of God is *infinite* also; and there is the same proportion of infinite to infinite, as of one to one.

Now put both these Reasons together: If the Providence of God be thus *exactly careful* of every the least particular; if he be thus *infinitely wise* for the disposal of all to the best; no wonder then, though *every Event in the World be both beautiful, and in its time.*

For the further clearing of this Truth, there are two *Doubts* or *Queries* to be resolved, that seem to oppose it.

Vindication from Doubts and Objections.

1. What's the reason why this *Beauty of Providence* doth not appear to us; but that many things seem so full of disorder and confusion in the World?

2. How may this consist with the permission of sinful actions, which can neither be *beautiful* nor *seasonable*?

I begin with the first, to shew the reason why in so many things we cannot discern this *Beauty of Providence*. The verse of the Text tells us, *That man cannot find out the work of God from the beginning to the end*: That is, 'tis above humane capacity to comprehend the reason of all Divine proceedings; we cannot find them fully out from the beginning to the end, And so *Job. 9. 10. He doth great things past finding out. Lo, he goeth by me, and I see him not: He passeth on also, but I perceive him not.* And again, *Chap. 23. 8, 9. Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand where he doth work,*  
but

but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him. The meaning is, that where ever Job turned his eyes, there were still some passages of Providence which he could not apprehend the meaning of. God hath reserved this as a peculiar prerogative to himself. *It is not for us to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power, Acts. 1. 7.*

There may be a two-fold reason of this :

1. The obscurity of the things themselves. There are *treasures of wisdom*, Col. 2. 3. not only for their *preciousness*, but for their *privateness* too; *hidden wisdom* : 2 Cor. 1. 7. *secrets of wisdom* : and these are double to that which is (as Zophar speaks), Job 11. 6. That is, those concealed Providences which we do not discern the reason of, are of much greater proportion than those that appear. We read in that fore-cited place, *Ezek. 1. 16. of a wheel within a wheel*, signifying those involutions and in-

tricacies which there are in the ways of Providence. And the Psalmist tells us, that *His way is in the sea, and his paths in the great waters; and his foot steps are not known.* Psal. 77. 19.

As it is in the works of Nature, where there are many common things of excellent beauty, which for their *littleness* do not fall under our sense; they that have experimented the use of *Microscopes*, can tell, how in the parts of the most minute creatures there may be discerned such gildings and embroideries, and such curious variety as another would scarce believe. Why, 'tis so in the works of Providence; there are very many passages of frequent daily occurrence, whose excellent contrivance doth not fall under our sense or observation.

2. Our own ignorance and short-sightedness; and that in a two-fold respect:

1. We cannot see that *end and drift* which Providence aims at in many par-

particulars ; and therefore no wonder though they seem unto us rude and uncomely. We measure things by this false balance of *Opinion*, which weighs only their *outsides*, and doth not look upon their *ends* and *relations*. Now the beauty of things doth consist much in their tendency and reference to their proper ends. If an ignorant man that knows not the reason of a Wind-Mill or Water-Mill should look upon them only as places of *habitation*, he cannot think them well situated, where they are so much exposed to the violence of winds and waves ; whereas he that understands how the wisdom of the Artificer hath contrived those motions unto *useful ends*, must needs confess a beauty and comeliness in the work. 'Tis so likewise in the events of Providence, which none can rightly apprehend, but he that understands the special drift and purposes which they are designed to.

2. We cannot see *the whole frame of things*, how sundry particular Events,

in a mutual relation, do concur to make up the beauty of the whole. He that can discern only two or three wheels in a Clock, how they move one against another, would presently think, that there were *contrariety* and *confusion* in the work. Whereas he that beholds *the whole frame*, and discerns how all those divers motions do jointly conduce to the same end cannot chuse but acknowledg a wise order in the contrivance of it. So likewise is it in the *frame of times*; where he alone is fit to judg of *particulars*, who understands how they refer to *the general*. But now we are *but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon the earth are as a shadow*. (saith Bildad) Job. 8. 9. We look upon things according to a *short succession*, and so are not able to discern that beauty which there is in their references to other matters *afar*. But now, to God a thousand years is but as one day. He beholds all things, whether past or to come, in the same *instant*. There is no *succession* in Eternity

Psa. 90. 4.

2 Pet. 3. 8.

ternity, but all things within the reach of time are *present* unto that. Though in the revolution of a Wheel, there be a mutual succession betwixt the parts contained *in it*; yet an eye that is placed *without*, can at the same time discern the whole motion. Thus also is it in the revolution of Time; where, though there be a mutual succession betwixt those things that are contained *under time*; yet God, who is *without* and *above it*, doth at the same view behold all together. So that 'tis no wonder, though many things seem beautiful to him, which to us who are so short-sighted, may appear harsh and deformed.

2. The second *Quere* was this, If there be such an over-ruling Providence which doth dispose of all to the best; How comes it to pass that there are so many sinful actions in the World?

To this I answer two things:

1, *When men thwart Gods will of Precept, they serve his will of Providence.*

*vidence.* Those particular Interests of Gain, Honour, Pleasure, Revenge, which sway mens desires and actions, are wisely contrived to the promoting of Gods Decrees and Glory. When *Augustus* made the general Tax upon the World, His end was to enrich himself, and fill his Coffers But God used it as a means to fulfil the Prophecy of Christ's birth at *Bethlehem*. *Rehoboam*, and *Jebu*, and *Cyrus*, had all their several aims in those works wherein they were subservient to Providence. And they did still accomplish his counsel in prosecuting their own designs.

2. *That which in respect of man's execution is wicked and disorderly, in respect of God's appointment is beautiful and comely.* There could not be any more horrid act, than the betraying and Crucifying of our blessed Saviour; and yet even in this (as it was decreed by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledg of God, Acts 2. 23.) there was the greatest Miracle of Divine Wisdom that ever was



was extended to the Creature : such depths of Policy, which all the subtilty of Men and Angels was not able to *contrive*, no nor to *suspect*, *κατασκευασμένη* *εργα*, as the Apostle calls it, *Eph*, 3. 10. *Interchangeable wisdom* of *curious variety*, as the word signifies. Now if God could thus manage the *worst* action of man to the *best* advantage of man, well may we conclude, That every event of Providence is Beautiful in its time.

I have now done with the *Expli-Applicat.* *cation* and *Confirmation* of the Text. In the *Application* it may be useful for these lessons :

1. For *Information*, and that in a twofold respect :

1. It may teach us our duty to <sup>1. Use</sup> take notice of, and observe the works <sup>For In-</sup> of Providence. <sub>mation.</sub>

2. It may direct us what to judge of the affairs of these times under which we are fallen.

1. If all the events of Providence be so wisely contrived, 'tis certainly then our duty to consider and to take notice

notice of them. *Psal. 111. 2. The works of the Lord are great sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.* And again, v. 4. *He hath so done his marvellous works, that they ought to be had in remembrance.* Now a man cannot be said to seek out, or to remember that which he doth not carefully observe. 'Tis the chief scope of that *Psalme* to excite men unto this duty. And *David* makes it a note of Piety for men to delight themselves in the contemplation of God's works, to remember

*Ila. 65. 4. Him in his ways,* as the Prophet *Isaiah* speaks. This *Asaph* found by experience to be a special Antidote against all diffidence and carnal fears; in the 77 *Psalme* when he was surprised with those sad thoughts, *Will the Lord cast us off for ever? and will he be no more entreated? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? &c.* He presently applies himself to this remedy, v. 11, 12. *I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will remember thy wonders of old: I will medi-*

*meditate also of thy works, and talk of thy doings,*

If a man were but well read in the story and various passages of his life, he might be able to make an experimental Divinity of his own. He that is observant of Gods *former dealings* and dispensations towards him, may be thence furnished with a rich treasury of experience against all *future* conditions.

There are very many duties that depend upon a right understanding of the times. A man knows not how to order his *prayer* and *praises*, without some observation and skill in these. It was a great commendation which was given to the men of *Issachar*, that *they had understanding in the times to know what Israel ought to do*, 1 Chron. 12. 32. and the ignorance of these the Wise-man complains of, as being a very great evil, Eccles. 9. 12. *For man knoweth not his time; but as fishes are taken in an evil net, and as birds are caught in the snare: so are the sons of men*  
*snared*

*nared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them.*

Now this observance of Gods works and dispensations, is a duty always seasonable, but more especially in such times as these. 'Tis commonly observed, that though smooth and peaceable times are best for the *Liver*, the man that lives in them; yet times that are full of change and vicissitude, are best for the *Writer*, the Historian that writes of them: so though quiet seasons may best suit with our desires and outward condition; yet these disturbed, confused times, may be the best improved by observation, and do most set forth the wisdom of *Providence*.

The *Common* Providence of God in the various seasons and order of Nature, may afford excellent matter for contemplation; much more that *special* Providence of his in the guidance of humane affairs, which have been always managed with various wisdom.

But

But especially in his dispensations towards these latter ages, wherein there have been many new, unusual emergencies, such as our forefathers have not known.

How many strange observable passages may a considering man pick out amongst the affairs of these few last years? How strangely hath the whole course of things both in Church and State, been turned about, beyond all mens imaginations? How hath God in every respect, and on all sides, pulled the wisdom of the wise, and enfeebled the strength of the mighty, abating the glory of all humane power, lifting himself up above others, in those things wherein they dealt most proudly, effecting great matters by despised means! What strange ebbs and flows of hope have we known? When men have been most full of confidence, then some unexpected accident hath intervened, and disappointed all: so that the wisest men have been often put to stand at a gaze, not knowing what to judg

judg of the issue of things : And (though we have not had leisure to observe it, yet) there has been something equivalent to this in other Nations; the whole Christian world being generally full of strange Commotions. Now we may certainly conclude, That all these unusual turns and changes of things, are not for nothing. There is some great design to be accomplished by them ; 'tis our duty with *diligence* to observe the passages, and with *patience* to attend the issue.

2. This may direct us what to judg of the present times under which we are fallen. If it be so that every particular Event is so exactly regular and beautiful ; hence then we may infer, how all that confusion and disorder which seem to be in the affairs of these times is not so much in the things themselves, as in our mistake of them. The *Roughest seasons* (though they may be unsuitable to our desires) yet have in them a proper comeliness as well as times of the *greatest serenity*.

True

True indeed, the Scripture doth sometimes mention *evil days* ; but Eph. 5. 16. this is not so to be understood, as if Time in it self could be evil, either *naturally*, for so God pronounceth it good ; or *morally*, because 'tis not subjected to any Moral Rule ; but only *accidentally*, in respect of our mistake and abuse of it ; when either we judg of it according to our own *wishes* ; or mispend it according to our own *lusts*. 'Tis only unwise, <sup>2 Tim. 3:</sup> unholy men, that make unhappy <sup>1, 2</sup> times.

As in the *works of Creation*, nothing is properly deformed, but every thing hath a peculiar beauty, according to that rank and station wherein 'tis placed : though in vulgar speech we use to call a Toad and a Serpent ugly ; yet that is only in reference to common esteem : whereas in respect of the Universe they are as regular and comely parts as any of the rest ; their outward shapes being suitable to their inward forms, and those purposes for which they

L

are

are intended. So it is likewise in *the ways of Providence*; those designs that in respect of our apprehensions are carried on by a cryptical involved method, are yet in themselves of as excellent contrivance, as any of those that seem to be of more facil and perspicuous order.

If a man in these times shall with his reason consult only the outward face of things they must needs seem full of irregularities and disorder; when the spirits of men in the prosecution of the same ends, and the pretence of *publick welfare*, shall be imbittered against one another, even

Eccl. 5. 8. to *publick ruin*: when there is a violent perverting of judgment and justice in a Nation, and on the side of Chap. 4. 1. *the oppressor is might: but the oppressed have none to comfort them.*

When there is a total subversion of those degrees in which the order and Eccl. 10. 7 harmony of things doth consist, *Servants being on horses, & Princes walking as servants on the earth: When Job 9. 5, 6. the mountains are removed, and pillars*



*lars of the earth tremble.* When Religion and Laws (which are the foundation of a People) are out of course. Psal. 11. 6.

And yet even in all this, there may be a design of Providence for our good. This is certain, All God's Promises to his Church are infallibly true, and all his dispensations (though never so cross in outward appearance) have a tendency towards the fulfilling of those Promises. And why should not a man rest himself in this belief?

In our natural enquiries after the *efficient* cause of things, when our Reason is at a stand, we are fain sometimes to sit down, and satisfy our selves in the notion of *occult qualities*; and therefore much more should we be content to be ignorant in the *final* cause of things, which lye more deep and obscure than the other.

Let no man then presume to censure the several vicissitudes and changes of things, as if they were unseasonable

sonable and ill contrived. Remember we are but short-sighted, and cannot discern the various references and dependences amongst the great affairs in the world, and therefore may be easily mistaken in our opinion of them. We do in this world (for the most part) see only the *dark side* of Providence. At the last and great day of *manifestation*, when the whole plot of Divine Love shall be laid open, then we shall be able to discern the *Beauty of Providence* in all the rugged passages of it; how *tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and the sword, do all work for the best to those that love God.*

Rom. 8.  
28. 35.

*Judge nothing therefore before its time, 1 Cor. 4. 5. Consider, we cannot see the works of God from the beginning to the end. And you know there is a vast difference betwixt the beginning and the end of a building. It may be our lots perhaps in these times to see only the beginning of the Fabrick; when the old frame is de-*

demolished, the rubbish lies scattered about, the new materials being gathered into heaps. Posterity perhaps may see the *end* of it, when all these confused preparations shall be made up into a beautiful structure.

2. This may serve for *reproof* of *Use 2.*  
two sorts of persons. For Re-  
proof.

1. Those that do not observe or regard the works of the Lord.

2. Those that murmur and repine at them.

1. This may reprove those that do not observe or regard the works of the Lord. 'Tis a great argument of infidelity and irreligion, when men let many remarkable Providences pass by them without notice or observation: or when they look upon them only in a slight and superficial manner, like those whom the Prophet *Isaiah* complains of, *Seeing m. 1. Isa. 42. 20. ny things but observing not.*

This sin of Inadvertency of God's various Providences, hath been oftentimes severely *threatned* and *punished*

in Scripture, *Isa. 5. 12. Because they regard not the work of the Lord, nor consider the operation of his hands, therefore is my people gone into captivity.* And again, *Jer. 12. 11. The whole land is made desolate, because no man layeth it to heart.*

The heaviest Judgments that can befall a Nation, are *Captivity* and *Desolation*. And yet they are both denounced against this stupidity and carelessness of Spirit. And you may guess at the hainousness of the sin, by the greatness of the punishment.

'Tis a sin, that is after a more especial manner appropriated to wicked men. *Psal. 10. 4, 5. The wicked through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts. Thy judgments are far above, out of his sight.* Things that he never enquires after, or regards, as if he were not at all concern'd in them. *Quæ supra nos nihil ad nos:* He looks no further than second Causes, unto which he ascribes

ascribes the success or miscarriage of Events; and doth not take notice of that Divine Providence, by whose influence they are guided. You see this is made the note of wicked men. And therefore, as we would avoid that *censure*, so still it concerns us to avoid the *sin*.

2. This may serve for the reproof of those that murmur and repine at the works of Providence, that take upon them the Magisterial judgment of events; as if they could tell how to frame things much better, and to contrive the issue of things to greater advantage. How ordinary is it for men to discourse thus concerning the great changes of these times? as if the unsearchable ways of God were to be judged before the Tribunal of Humane Reason: *Who art thou O man that Disputest with God* (saith the Apostle)? How despicable, in comparison to His Infinite Majesty and Wisdom? If there be a Commonwealth amongst Ants and Bees (as some Naturalists say there

there is), 'twould make a man smile to think, that they should take upon them the censure of State-matters amongst us men: and yet here the disproportion it finite; whereas betwixt God and man 'tis infinite: *As the Heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts, and my ways than your ways.*

II. 55. 8, 9.

He that will take upon him to mend the contrivance of things, let him remember (says one of the *Stoicks*) that the first thing he is to do, *is to mend God*, to teach him wisdom and care. And if he shall think himself unfit for that, let him not presume upon this. For consider, is not the Providence of God *exactly careful* of every thing? Is not he *infinitely wise*, to dispose of all to the best? Are not all things *subservient* to His will? Why certainly then, (however matters may appear to us) yet nothing could have been better than it is. every thing shall prove *for the best*, in respect of *His Glory*,

*Epictetus.*

and (if we belong to Him) in respect of our good too.

'Tis an observable check which Solomon gives to such presumptuous persons as are apt to repine at, and censure the course of things, *Eccl. 7. 10. Say not thou, What is the cause why the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.* It should seem, that those flourishing days of Solomon, so very eminent for all kind of plenty and peace (*Silver being in Jerusalem as <sup>2</sup> Kings stones, and Cedars as the Sycamore <sup>20. 5.</sup> in the vale for abundance*), were not yet without some morose repining spirits, who were still maligning the present condition of things; and therefore no wonder if we find the like humour among men in other times.

This the wise man doth here reprove, both by a *prohibition* and a *reason*.

1. A Prohibition, *Say not thou, What is the cause why the former days*

*days were better than these?* that is, Be not transported with that common humour of censuring and condemning the state of times, and commending the times past; as if the course of Events were not managed by the same wise Providence now, which governed the world before, He doth not forbid men to enquire after the cause of publick sufferings: For this is frequently enjoined in Scripture, that upon the occasion of any special judgment, we should search and try our hearts, consider our ways, and our doings, labouring to find out the cause of Gods displeasure, that we may accordingly meet him in his ways. But the meaning is, that we should not take upon us the pcremptory censure of times and dispensations, presuming to condemn those things which we cannot understand.

2. The Reason. *For thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this thing.* That's a figurative expression, stiled a *Meiosis*, when a phrase signifies much



much more than the naked words do import. The meaning is, 'tis extream folly for men to take upon them the censure of Times and Providences, as if they were competent Judges of such matters.

There are two places of Scripture that will make up a Syllogism to prove this Conclusion.

*He that judgeth of a matter before he hath enquired into, and understands it, it is folly and shame unto him,* Prov.

18. 13. But now, *It doth not belong unto us to know the times & the seasons which the Father hath kept in his power,* A&T. 17. And therefore it must needs be folly to take upon us the Magisterial censure of such things.

Every day hath its proper *evil*, Mar 6. 34. as well the former as these; and every day hath its proper *advantage*, as well these as the former. The very dregs of time, if we endeavour to make a right use of them, Eph. 5. 16. may be redeemed into opportunity.

There are two reasons of mens offending in this kind :

1. When

1. When they look only upon some *particulars*, without the consideration of their *proper end*, or *general frame*. Now 'tis true indeed, that some particular Events, *singly* looked upon, may seem very prejudicial; but the whole *texture* of affairs in their *co-operation*, shall prove for the best. *All things shall work together* ~~every~~ *for good to those that love God*, Rom. 8. 28.

But now 'tis above our capacity to comprehend the whole frame of things; And that is not disorder in respect of the *whole* which to us may appear so, being compared with some *particulars*. You know, that in the natural body the variety and dissimilitude of parts, is required to the beauty of the whole; the roundness of the head, the length of the arm, the flatness of the hand; blackness in one part, and whiteness in another; all these being singly compared amongst themselves, though they may seem to argue some opposition and deformity, yet look upon them as they stand

stand in relation to the whole frame, and it will appear how in their several ways they do each of them conduce to its comeliness and order. If this lower World had in it no changes and varieties, but were in all respects alike, it would not then be so properly *κόσμος*, a beautiful World, as *μάζα*, a Lump or Mass.

2. Another occasion of mens offending in this kind, is, when they will judg of Events according as they suit with their own wishes. And in this case, 'tis impossible that every humor should be satisfied, because particular desires (besides their opposition to one another) will likewise be inconsistent with the general design. It would seem better perhaps to every private man, if he himself were a Magistrate; or a King; and every common Soldier a Commander, or a General. But how could this consist with the exigencies of the Commonwealth, or an Army, where there must be degrees, and disproportion of places, according to the necessity of several

veral employments? 'Tis so in the government of this great Universe: that difference which there is betwixt particular things, and times, and persons, doth much conduce to the beauty and conveniency of the whole.

'Tis our safest way then to conclude; that all matters are for the best, *beautiful in their times*, though to us they may seem full of disorder and contrariety. Thus the Apostle in that remarkable place, *Rom. 11, 33*. speaking concerning the rejection of the Jews, when God would cast off and destroy his peculiar people, and that for his own glory and advantage; he concludes, *His judgments unsearchable, and his ways past finding out: But of him, and to him are all things*: as if he should have said, God will do this strange work; and though for my part I know not the reason of it, *His judgments are unsearchable, &c.* yet sure I am, that *of him and to him are all things*; that, is as the making of all things was *of his power*, so the resolution of all things should be *to his glory*.

Though

Though *his judgments are as the great deep*, for their obscurity and unmeasurableness, not to be fathomed by our shallow apprehensions, yet *his righteousness is as the strong mountains*, for their eminency and stableness, *Psal. 36. 6. Though clouds and darkness may be round about him, yet righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne*, *Psal. 97. 2.*

Use 3.  
For Exhortation

3. This may serve for *Exhortation*, to perswade us unto these four duties.

1. Not to be too hasty in our desire or prosecution of any thing.

2. Nor to trouble our selves with any solicitous care about the success of things.

3. To be equally prepared for all future Events.

4. To behave our selves with carefulness and contentment in all conditions.

1. Hence we learn, Not to be too hasty in our desire or prosecution of any thing. God best knows the fittest season for every Event; we shall have

have it when its time is come ; and before that, 'twould not be beautiful :  
 Prov. 25.  
 13. *Like Snow in Harvest* (as the Wise man speaks) which though it might possibly be some *refreshment* to our particular, yet would be a *deformity* in the course of Nature.

Transla-  
 ted Fear-  
 ful:

There are some men whom the Prophet stiles of *a hasty heart*, במהר ילב, Isa. 35. 4. who are too heady and impatient in their hopes. And it is a weakness that arises from our infidelity and distrust of Providence. *For he that believeth, maketh no hast*, Chap. 28. 16. 'Tis God's usual course to defer what he promises, thereby to exercise our faith, to put an edg on our desires, and a value upon the blessing. In natural affairs, we are fain to expect the proper season and *maturity* of things ; the Husbandman will wait for his Harvest ; he doth not expect to sow and reap both in a day. It should be so likewise in other matters. And since that is always the fittest time for every thing which God appoints, it will become us then patiently

tiently to wait his leisure, and not with over-hasty desires to run before him.

*Abraham* was fain to tarry a long time for a Son, *David* for a Kingdom, and the whole World for *Christ*. He that rightly understands the worth of any blessing, and his own want, cannot think much to wait for it. The poor man, at the Pool of *Bethesda*, being sensible of his own lameness, was content to tarry there thirty eight years in hopes of a remedy. Suppose a Promise were deferred to the utmost, yet do but compare the shortness of our lives with the duration of our souls, and then no delay can seem tedious. *Neq; enim est aliquid in tam brevibus vitæ metis ita serum,* *quod longum expectare immortalis putet animus.* A man conscious to himself of his own mortality, cannot think any time long which is confined within the narrow bounds of life.

*Boetius*  
*Consol. l. 4.*

*im-*  
*5*

Is there then any mercy which thou expectest? Do not over-rashly  
M hasten

hasten it with any indirect project, as if thou wert able to help the Providence of God with wiles and devices of thine own. Though it be long in coming, yet it will come at last; it cannot be more slow than sure. When *Isaac* was laid upon the Alter, and bound for a Sacrifice, and his Father's hand lift up for the fatal blow, yet then there came a rescue from Heaven, which would not have been so beautiful, if by any unlawful act it had been hastened before that time, either by *Abraham's* sparing his son, or *Isaac's* resisting his Father.

*Joseph* did undergo a tedious imprisonment in the Land of *Egypt*; 'tis likely, being the Key-keeper, he might have taken his own time, and have scaped when he would; but then he had lost his preferment: whereas by tarrying God's leisure, he was delivered with advantage. Though *David* had been a long while anointed to a Kingdom, yet because he did not use any hasty means for the enjoying of it, therefore did Providence  
clear



clear the Passage for him, and prospected it to him afterwards. He might have killed *Saul* in the Cave, and *Abner* too, when he found them sleeping; but then he had been over-hasty; 'twere better they should fall by their Enemies. *The Lord shall smite them when their day shall come to dye*, 1. Sam. 26. 10. And before that, 'twould be but rashness to attempt it. And so likewise when he stopp'd himself in his haste after *Nabal's* life, you know within a while after God took him away by his own immediate hand, and gave both his Wife and Estate to *David*.

An over-forwardness in the hastening of our hopes, is the ready way to imbitter them unto us. You know how much trouble and contention there grew from that hasty act of *Sarah*, when in her mistrust of the Promise, and fear of being childless, she must needs give *Hagar*, to *Abraham*.

So likewise for *Jacob's* too much haste in getting the blessing by a

wrong means, you know it cost him afterwards many dangers, and a tedious exile. Whereas if he had tarried longer, God would have brought it about for him by a more easie and beautiful way.

Gods time is the best ; and he never fails his own season : *I the Lord will hasten it in its time*, Isa. 60. 22. For us to measure the fitness of seasons by our own weak apprehensions, is not this to set the Sun by our Dial ? we are too short-sighted, apt to antedate the Promises. *The Lord will arise, and have mercy upon Sion, when the time to favour her, yea, when the set-time is come*. Psal. 102, 13.

2. Hence we learn, Not to trouble our selves with any solicitous care about the success of things. To serve Providence in the usual means, that is our work ; but the issue and event of things, that's God's work, we have nothing to do in it. That which is not under our power, should not be under our care. If there be nothing at our disposal, but that all Events do depend

depend ~~upon~~ upon an higher Providence, 'twere but a vain thing than to busie our selves with hopes and fears about them. Much of the disquietness amongst men in the world, arises from hence, that they busie themselves about God's work, and neglect their own.

Is there then an *evil* thou *fear'st*? why, 'tis not in the power of any creature to hurt thee. Though men should use plots and threats against thee, yet they can do nothing. They sate together, and counselled against *David*, devising to take away his life, *Psal.* 31. 13. But what was his comfort? why, saith he, *v.* 15. *My times are in thy hands, O Lord.* He knew that no ill success towards him was in the power of others.

Or is there an evil thou *feelest*? why, it comes from the hand of God. Be not then impatient. 'Tis but a childish currish thing to beat the rod or bite the stone that hurt thee. *David* could quietly vndergo the railing of *Shimei*, when once he had discerned

ned in it the Providence of God.

Or is there *a good thou hopest for* ? why, it is not within the reach of thy abilities. And therefore 'twere but in vain to think thou couldst command it by thine own endeavours. We would count it a mad thing for one that is naturally low, to busie himself in the study & labour of growing tall, because this is not alterable by any thing in our power ; *since no man can add one cubit to his stature.* Why, 'tis so in other things likewise ; God doth as well set bounds to our *estates*, as to our *statures* ; and of our selves we can as little add one *penny* to that as one *cubit* to this. And therefore, never let any one think that he can raise himself as he pleases, and be the Master of his own Fortunes. Though he were furnished with the greatest helps and probabilities of advancement ; yet *the battle is not always to the strong, nor the race to the swift ; neither bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill ;*  
but

*but time and chance happen to them all.* That is, there is a secret Providence, which doth so unavoidably dispose of these lower Events, that the likeliest means we can use, cannot promise us any certain success.

They that with a compass-wisdom will delay Events, that with forecasts and provisions will bind Providence; for the most part, are not only disappointed in what they hoped for, but do meet with a curse instead of it. See that place, *Isa. 50, 11. Behold all ye that kindle a fire, that compass your selves about with sparks, walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that you have kindled; this shall you have of my hands, you shall lye down in sorrow.*

3. Hence we learn to be equally prepared for all future Events, not wishing for one more than another. Whatever comes to pass shall be *beautiful*, and therefore should be *welcom*. All things that befall us, shall lead us on to the same Journey's end, Happiness. And there-

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fore we should not in our expectation of future matters, engage our selves in the desire of any particular success; but with a *Traveller's* indifference (as *Epictetus* speaks in *Arrian*) who when he comes to doubtful turnings, doth not desire one way should be true more than another. So should we entertain every thing that we meet with in our passage through this life; especially since we are sure that there is none of them but (if we belong to God) shall further us in that which is our main business, our journey to Happiness.

And therefore to be very solicitous about any particular success, what is it but to limit and confine the power of God? nay, to prefer our own policy before the wisdom of Providence; as if we alone were able to discern what would be the best issue of things; Mark how the same Heathen bespeaks such a person: Thou foolish man (saith he) dost thou not desire that which will be most convenient

nient for thee? And can there be any thing better than what God appoints? τί τὸ ἕτερον ἐπὶ σοὶ διαφθεῖν τὴν κρίτην, παρὰ τοῦ τὸν σύβουλον. Wherefore by such immoderate and eager desires, thou dost as much as in thee lies to corrupt the Judg, and seduce the Counsellor.

The *Stoicks* have many excellent passages to this purpose: *Nunquam sapientem pœnitentiæ subit* (saith *Seneca*) *quia nihil melius illo tempore fieri potuit quam quod factum est.* <sup>De benef. lib. 4. 34.</sup> A wise man is never troubled at any cross Event; he knows nothing could have been better than it is. *Omnia illi succedunt; nihil præter opinionem accidit.* All things are successful to him, he is disappointed in nothing, because indifferent to every thing. Whilst others are tossed up and down betwixt hopes and fears, his mind is established.

Now if meer *Reason* could advance *Heathen* men to such resolutions, much more than should a *Christian's Faith* in the Providence of God

## The Beauty

God, with those many Promises wherein he hath an interest, raise his mind to this Heroick temper, and make him bend himself with a submissive compliance unto every condition.

**Object.**      *Obj. But what then, may not a man (nay, should he not) be very earnest in his desires and prayers, for some particular deliverance or blessing?*

**Sol.**          I answer, Yes. But in all temporal matters, it must be still with a tacit submission to the will of God, who knows better what is fit for us, than we do our selves. See the example of *David* to this purpose, *1 Sam. 15. 25.* He was there put to a very great exigence, his Son *Absolom* had suddenly raised a great Army against him, insomuch as he was fain to fly for his life: There were some of the Priests adhered to him, and followed him with the Ark; but he, upon serious thoughts, desires them to return



## of Providence.

EN

turn again: For (saith he) if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation. But if he thus say unto me, I have no delight in thee; behold here I am, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him. Here's no deep anxiety or agitation of Spirit, no bitter exclaiming against his unnatural Son, and disloyal Subjects; but quiet succumbency, an indifferent composure of mind, which resolves to be content in every condition. He puts the case both ways, and is provided for either. If it prove after *this* manner, why then so; if *otherwise*, then thus. So true is that common Emblem, That every wise man is a *Cube* or *Dye*, not to be flung from his bottom. Let him be cast any way, he still lights upon his right *basis*; whatever his condition may be, *Si fractus illabatur orbis*, yet his mind is still calm and peaceable.

Obj.

**Object.** *Obj. But would you have a man turn Stoick? Should he not be troubled at the afflictions that befall him?*

**Sol.** *I answer: Yes: He must be sensible of his sufferings, and consequently cannot but grieve under them, especially so far as his own sin and neglect hath occasioned them. But then it should be his care to quiet his heart from immoderate trouble, by the consideration of that wise Providence, who doth dispose of all for the best.*

*4. Lastly, Hence we learn, To behave our selves with cheerfulness and contentment under all those conditions which the Providence of God shall think fittest for us. 'Tis the Wise-man's own inference from the Text in the Verses immediately after it: There is nothing better, than for a man to rejoyce, and do good in his life; that he should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of his labour. For*  
if

V. 12, 13.

if every thing be best which God appoints, we have no reason then to be troubled at any Event. What though it do cross our desires, yet 'twould not have been so well, as if it had been otherwise. Things cannot be better with us than they are. *David* thought it a hard case, that that his Child by *Bathsheba* must dye. But did he lose any thing by it? Was it not better for him to have such a legitimate Heir as *Solomon* was? We are but ill contrivers of our own welfare, and therefore should without murmuring submit our selves and affairs to the government of Providence. What though that do straiten us in our desires? you are content to let the *Physician* bar you of many things, because he hath cast your water, felt your pulse. Consider then, doth it not as much concern us to provide for the salvation of our Souls, as the health of our Bodies? or doth not God understand this, as well as the *Physician* that? What reason have we then to

re-

repine at his proceedings? He was a wise Son in *Plutarch*, who being told by a friend that his Father would disinherit him, answered, *Non faciet nisi faciendum*: He will do nothing but what he should. Thus should a Christian willingly resign up himself in every condition, to the disposal of Providence.

Do but apply this Consideration according to the several occasions of your lives. When your hearts are at any times amazed or dejected with the thought of the *publick* confusions; remember, that God sits in Heaven, observing and ordering all these inferiour motions for the best.

And so too in the case of *particular* sufferings, 'tis likely that there is not any amongst you, but hath some kind of *private* trouble and grievance to which he is more especially exposed; either weakness of body, or too narrow a fortune, losses in your estates, disappointment in your hopes, unhappy relations, or the like. And these things, as we are

are *men*, cannot chuse but grate upon our spirits with some kind of harshness and discontent. But now as *believers*, we have a remedy against them. For consider, there is nothing befalls us by chance. All things are ordered by the deliberate counsel and fore-knowledge of God. He is as exactly careful of every one of us, as if he had nothing else to look after. Do not think that any trouble befalls you, because he doth not regard; for his Care and Providence doth extend to all things: nor because he *cannot* help; for He is Almighty: nor because he doth not regard; for He is equally infinite in all his Attributes. But because his *Wisdom* finds that condition to be fittest for thee: there is something amiss which should be mended. When the superfluous humour is corrected, the Physical Potion shall be taken away. And 'tis not reasonable to expect Physick and Health both together. When the wound is healed, the smarting-plaster shall be removed. And thou

thou mayest confidently say With  
David, Psal. 119. 75. *I know O Lord,  
that thy judgments are right, and  
that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted  
me.*

How happy might we be, if we  
could settle our hearts upon these  
Considerations,

**F I N I S.**

